

VILLAGE WORK IN INDIA



NORMAN RUSSELL

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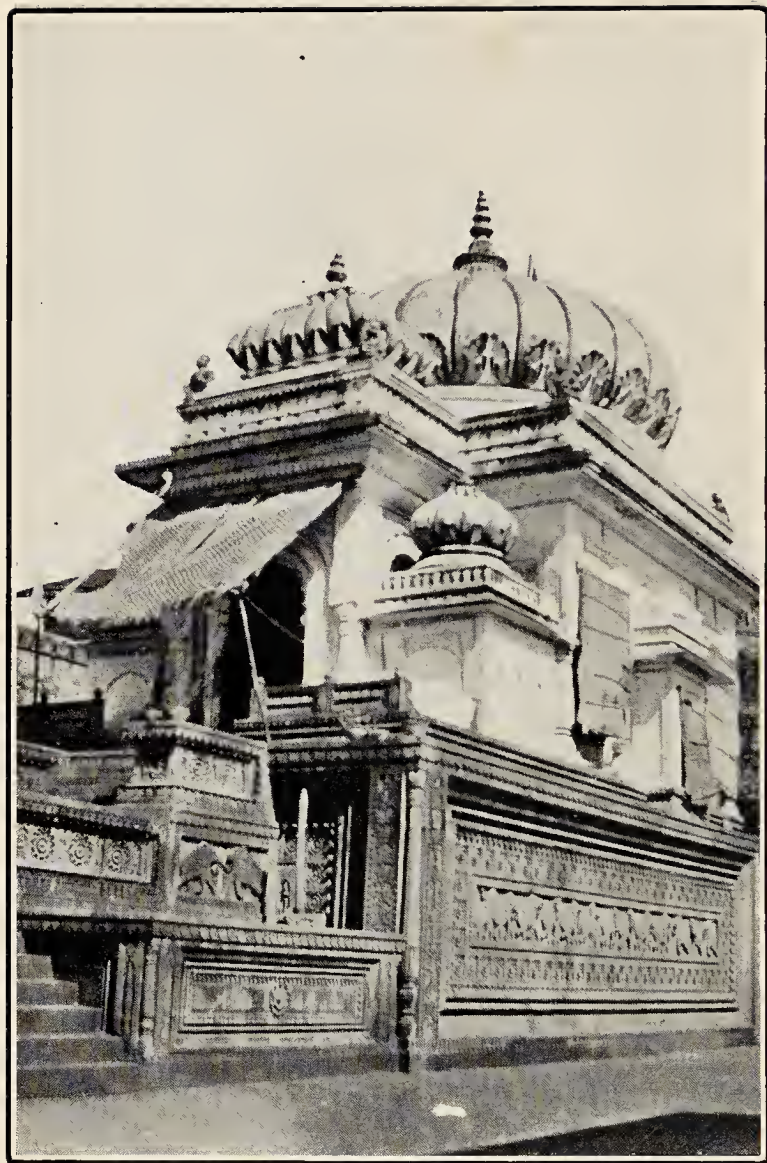
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VILLAGE WORK IN INDIA



A TEMPLE OF SHIV.

Village Work in India

PEN PICTURES FROM A
MISSIONARY'S EXPERIENCE

By
NORMAN RUSSELL

Of the Canada Presbyterian Church, Central India

R 615-



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PRONUNCIATION

WHILE the common Hindi words, the geographical and most of the historical names have been left unmarked and given their English spelling, most of the vernacular terms have been italicised and are to be pronounced according to the following rules:

a has the sound of a in *woman*.

á has the sound of a in *father*.

e has the vowel sound in *grey*.

i has the sound of i in *pín*.

í has the sound of i in *intrigue*.

o has the sound of o in *bone*.

u has the sound of u in *bull*.

ú has the sound of u in *rural*.

ai has the vowel sound in *briar*.

Contents

	PAGE
I	
THE VISION ON MOUNT TUMBAI . . .	9
II	
IN THE VALLEY	20
III	
A VILLAGE AUDIENCE	32
IV	
REJECTED	47
V	
UNDER THE MANGO TREES	65
VI	
NIGHT WORK IN THE BAZAAR	83
VII	
AGAINST GREAT ODDS	100
VIII	
BARWAI: AN OUTSTATION	114

IX

HOW WE DUG THE WELL	133
-------------------------------	-----

X

TAKING A CITY	149
-------------------------	-----

XI

PLANTING A MISSION AMONG THE BHILS	164
--	-----

XII

IN A TIGER'S DEN	187
----------------------------	-----

XIII

THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS	199
--------------------------------------	-----

XIV

WHEN SKIES ARE BRASS	218
--------------------------------	-----

XV

THE PROBLEM	239
-----------------------	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
A TEMPLE OF SHIV - - - - -	<i>Title</i>
A PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE - - - - -	48
TEMPLE BUILT FOR THE ETERNAL PEACE OF A QUEEN'S SOUL - - - - -	48
WOMAN GRINDING SPICE - - - - -	84
POTTER AT WORK - - - - -	84
OUR AUDIENCE IN THE MARKET PLACE -	105
THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER - - -	105
ON THE ROOF OF UNKARJI'S TEMPLE - -	167
BHIL SOLDIERS AND A RAW RECRUIT - -	167
A HINDU HOLY MAN - - - - -	206
GURU AND DISCIPLES - - - - -	206
ONE OF INDIA'S POOR - - - - -	219
EVERY BLADE OF GRASS GATHERED FROM HILLSIDE AND HEDGEROW - - -	219
FAMINE BOYS AND THE CARPETS THEY HAVE WOVEN - - - - -	237

Village Work in India

I

THE VISION ON MOUNT TUMBAI

It was morning. Standing on one of the loftiest spurs of the Vindhya, we were looking down on the valley of the Nerbudda 2,000 feet below. The sun had just cleared the low-lying mists, and, sweeping up the long vista, unfolded a lovely panorama of miniature lake, dense woodland and green and golden grain fields. Behind us, like a rampart, stretched out on either hand the great hillsides; while far away in the melting distance rose, in dull grey, the parallel range of the Satpuras, these two guarding, like lofty walls, the garden valley of Nimar.

As the mist rolled away, there peeped up out of the darkness at our feet a group of humble villages, mere broken patches of dull-faded thatch, red tiled roof and yellow straw pile. Farther on, the vapour seemed to melt into a lovely stretch of mango trees, from among whose

leaves the more pretentious whitewashed walls of Bagode and Parlia glittered in the morning sunlight. Beyond these, field and village followed in quick succession, and so close together that we could barely distinguish where the trees of one parted from those of another. As the air cleared we could see still farther, the melting mist unveiling not single villages but groups, some clustered together in the river bottoms, others banked on the hillsides, but still more fading into indefiniteness against the greys and greens of the richly clad soil, and only distinguished by some conspicuous temple-dome, tank or other landmark, well known to our guides. It was as though we were standing on the shore of some great sea of human activity, a throbbing flood of life and labour; East and West, far as the eye could reach, and wide as to where in the ill-defined distance the temple tops of Maheshwar and Mandalesar overshadowed the sacred waters of the Nerbudda, it stretched in one ever broadening and denser succession; and even beyond our line of definite vision, we knew that for forty miles South, far as the purplish grey of our broken sky-line, another and quite as densely populated plain stretched up from the farther river bank.

The wheat was just ripening, and its yellow patches stood out in sharp contrast to the brilliancy of the flowering poppy fields, the bright green of the sugar-cane, and the darker hued *grām* and *jowār*. Here and there cultivation was interrupted by stretches of rugged jungle or deep ravines, but oftener by clumps of noble trees—mango and *pīpal*, banyan and *imlī*—each clump marking a village. Right up into the rocks of the foothills flowed this sea of cultivation, the necessity of man extracting, by means of irrigation, what unaided Nature refused to yield.

We looked down upon one of the earliest and loveliest haunts of man, the scene of many a struggle, many a battle between Hindu and Mohammedan powers, many a Maratha raid, many a contest between rival religions, but which never, within the recollection of history, had gazed into the face of famine or known the horrors of drouth. It was one of the gardens of India, far famed as the land of plenty, the refuge of the famine stricken and needy, and with no curse but that which emanated from the sin and folly of man. After the first rushing glamour of its beauty, the thought that gradually crowded out all others was that beneath each of these innumerable roof-tops and

countless grey thatches, human souls were working out the problem of life. There must have been upwards of a million of people in this valley,¹ and their villages were grouped together more closely than farmhouses in our well settled districts at home. Perhaps the acutest and most persistent sensation of the missionary in the East, is this fever of millions. From the very first day, out of the maze of novel sights and sounds—the blinding sunlight, the oppressive heat, the babel of strange voices, the panorama of many hued faces and costumes, the gesticulating throngs of coolies and hack drivers, the strange vehicles, the little box-like shops with all sorts of unknown articles for sale, the many wonderful buildings, but chiefly the carved stone temples with forbidding and hideous figures peering out from their dark recesses—one impression leaps into

¹ The last census of Central India had given a population of 10,318,812, of whom 9,354,274 were returned as rural. These latter occupy 32,415 villages, giving an average of 288 to each village, 5.2 to each house, and is spread over an area of 78,219 square miles. In the Province of Bengal according to the census of 1891, there were 227,000 towns and villages to an area of 151,000 square miles or nearly two villages to the square mile. In N. W. P. and Oudh the average was about one to the square mile. With sixty houses to the village in Bengal, and seventy-five in the N. W. P., this gives a density in the former province of over 470, and in the latter of some 436 persons to the square mile.

the foreground; it is the overpowering feeling of the almost prodigality of human life, stirred by the presence of India's millions.

Well do I remember my first journey into the great city of Bombay. The narrow streets of the bazaar teemed with human life from shop front to shop front, and it was only with difficulty our carriage could thread its way; it was as though we were navigating some human Saragasso, the crowd opened to allow us to pass only to close in again, obliterating our track behind. The quickly changing expressions on their unfamiliar faces, and the sharp, chattering sound of their unknown tongues exercised an almost hypnotic effect, and we felt dazed and helpless. In travelling up country this feeling did not leave us. At each station crowds thronged into the third class carriages, till we naturally asked if there were a special excursion. But it is always excursion on Indian railways. Later we frequently saw them, when on special occasions they were gathering to some religious festival, packed closely in long rows on the open platform, waiting patiently hour after hour, beneath a burning sun or during some cold midnight, for a special to be sent for their accommodation. When passing through the cultivated districts,

far as the eye could reach on either side of the track, clumps of trees, blending often one with another, announced centres of human life. And when, leaving the railway, we went out among the villages, the impression was only deepened; village followed on village, market-place on market-place, and all of them, especially on bazaar days, thronged with eager busy crowds; at festival times the shrines and places of pilgrimage were so crowded we could barely find standing room, and the roads became practically impassable.

At first it was just their numbers, their poverty and seeming wretchedness that stirred our sympathies. But after we had learned the language and come into direct contact with the people, when we had entered into their condition and become acquainted with their joys and sorrows, we perceived that they are more than mere atoms of humanity; that they have their longings after something higher and better like ourselves; that however darkened by superstition and idolatry, they have a capacity for God, and that many of them are reaching out after Him. We perceived in them, moreover, a people of great possibilities, with characteristics which not only call forth our admiration, but which we feel might profit-

ably teach their lessons to the more material West. But, alas, temptations throng them; their whole environment drags them downwards; their so-called religious teachers are but grubbing with the muckrake like themselves; there is no prophet among them and no vision from God; their moral ideals are low; right and wrong are measured, not by eternal principles, but by conformity to rituals and conventionalities; woman has been degraded; the poor have been out-casted; and intellectual and spiritual development cut off.

These thoughts were in our minds as we watched the unfolding panorama of the valley beneath. Suddenly my companion called attention to our native guides, who, as if to give voice to our thoughts, had grouped themselves round a painted stone, set up by some wandering shepherd as a vain protection against man and beast. Muttering their superstitious nothings before this woodland fetich, they seemed fairly to represent the great proportion of India's people in their conception of God and His relation to man—God, if in their thoughts at all, too far off, too impersonal and indefinite to be Himself realised, insensible to the needs of His creatures, and only manifested in a legion of lesser deities of whom

man is either the vassal or the prey. What they once knew of God seems to have been forgotten and they grope after Him in vain. There is no hope, no help for them from within, and if salvation is to come to them it must be from without.

It was this very helplessness of the valley that touched us; the dumb appeal of its Christless multitudes broke upon us like a great cry, a cry for God—God as revealed in the loving heart of Christ. And yet what part had Christ in the life of that valley? In all its crowded villages there could not be detected a single church spire or Christian schoolhouse; from not a single rooftop were praises ascending to His Name. Except for a few hurried visits and some scattered tracts, no gospel influence had penetrated the valley. Away to the East *Unkârjî*, the phallic emblem of *Mâhâdev* (*Shîv*), enthroned in his fortress amidst the Nerbudda waters, still held religious sway over its people; and down by the river in front of us the same god still held court for his countless devotees neath the temple domes of Maheshwar.

It seemed as though in that hour Christ stood beside us, and, like a burning lava stream, His questions poured upon our conscience-stricken

hearts. Had the poor of Nimar no claim on His gospel? Had He not come to release their captives or give sight to their blind? Was not His liberty to be proclaimed to their bruised? Or did we think the struggle was hopeless, that the bones were so dry they could not live? Had custom and caste and hoary superstition grown so strong and reared such mighty bulwarks that they could not be broken?

Then there passed before us a vision. We saw that little company going forth in poverty and ignorance from the upper room in Jerusalem, with nothing to acclaim them but the scoffs and jeers of the multitude, and with no honours but the prison house and the cross. We saw them as, bearing their Evangel, they went out over lands and seas, ever meeting the same opposition, ever harried by the crowd, ever scourged by those in authority, and yet ever conquering by the power of their message and the spirit that dwelt within them, entering the palace of the mighty and the hovel of the poor, turning strong men into children and little ones into mighty warriors. We saw the conquering sweep of the Gospel down through the ages, as it sapped the foundations of empires and overthrew the thrones of kings, as it dragged

new nations into light and made them to be mightier than the men of old, strong in word and deed. We saw it winning its way through Europe, setting up on the ruins of man's greatest effort an Empire that owned for Lord the despised Nazarene. We saw it transplanted to the newer world of the West, gathering more lavishly the more liberally it strawed. We saw it again, as awakening anew to the great commission of its Founder, it sent forth its emissaries to the uttermost parts of the earth to win its Lord's inheritance and gather out from the nations a people for His Name. We could even trace in lines of fire its conquering pathway across the plains of India, turning ignorant villagers into men of wisdom and influence, and superstitious idolaters into children of light.

Then the vision turned to the valley beneath. It also was a part of the Lord Christ's inheritance, and upon its people He had set His seal, and well did we know that His soul would never be satisfied till He had gathered them, with all their wealth of patience and industry, into His kingdom. We saw the shrines of *Un-kârjî* deserted and the temples of Maheshwar crumbling away, creepers wound their destructive way over the places of the gods, moles

burrowed between their loosening stones, while, in the niches above, bats found their hiding-place; and in their stead temples to the Living God crowned each hillside, schoolhouses overshadowed the market-places, and hospitals and infirmaries peeped out from between the mango groves, while from a thousand thousand lips were hymned praises to the True Avatar, the Christ of God; peace reigned in the valley, for the hearts of the people were filled with the love of God and truth.

And there in the Christ presence, with the halo of the vision still around us, we renewed our determination to throw ourselves into the stream of God's purpose for this people; and taking one last, lingering look at the scene beneath, now fading into indistinctness behind the haze of deepening sunlight, we scrambled down the steep hillside, under overhanging rocks and through patches of jungle teak and *temrû*, to the service awaiting us in the villages of the *Kam-asdar*.

II

IN THE VALLEY

“*ARE! kyá huá?*” (Hulloa! what’s the matter?)

Well might we ask, for as our tonga (horse-cart) swung round the curve leading down to the river, a most disconsolate looking crowd burst on our view, three native preachers, the cook and bullock-drivers. Travel-stained and mud-besmattered, for it had been raining the night before, they stood beside the idle carts, gazing at what had once been an insignificant stream, but for some reason, which we afterwards discovered to be a burst dam, was now swollen to a river torrent.

“We can’t get across, Padri Sahib,” answered Bhagaji, “the water’s too deep and the *sámán* (goods) will get wet.”

We had already suffered that morning at a ford some six or eight miles back, from the rainfall of the previous day, and would probably have been there still, stuck in the mud, had it not been for a passing tribe of *Banjárrás*, who,

with all their proclivities for cattle lifting, were not averse to helping the padri sahibs. When we had sent the men on with the carts, we ourselves remaining to preach in a village, it was without suspicion of further trouble, for this was not the rainy season; and yet here we were in a worse fix than ever. There was absolutely no choice of roads, for only in one place had years of traffic sufficiently worn away the banks to admit of reaching the river bed.

“Well,” I said, after ascertaining the full extent of our dilemma, “we will try it with the tonga first,” and suiting action to the words, urged the horses into the stream. The water was muddy and no trace of the original track remained; forty feet away we could see where again the road climbed from the river up the almost perpendicular bank; but what lay between or what effect the torrent had made on the river bed, it was impossible to tell. Gradually as we crossed, the water rose from axle to tonga box, until, as we neared the other side, where, having most play, the stream had swept part of the bank away, it almost reached the seat. The horses were spurred up the steep incline with whip and voice; they were strong and eager to obey, struggling at trace and yoke; but

suddenly the country-made harness gave way, the frightened horses, slipping from under the yoke dashed madly up the bank, and the tonga fell back into the river bed, tumbling the native groom off the back seat and carrying us right into the middle of the swirling, muddy current.

It is not very often the jungle roads are as bad as this; but many a time have we sat down to breakfast at four or five in the afternoon, when, on our forced marches from one centre to another, the carts have been delayed or broken down on the way. Sometimes stones axle high block the road; at other times the ruts are so deep that the carts and contents are thrown in the ditch; again two carts meet in a narrow defile, where there is barely room for one, and the stupid, frightened oxen refuse or are unable to back out; or it may be the cart is stuck in the mud, and the bullocks will not budge till the load is taken off. Once we had our cart wheels broken to pieces, descending a rocky hillside, and were delayed a day till new ones could be procured from the nearest town. But these experiences only add to the excitement of camp life among the villages; there is seldom an accident, and then only a few bruises, a sprain, or a dislocated shoulder.

There was no little amusement, among the crowd on the bank, at the padri sahib's dilemma, as we scrambled out of our wet perch, along the narrow, slippery tonga pole and into the shallow water at the bank. And doubtless we were a more disconsolate looking crowd than those we had left on the other side; our horses scampering wildly over the fields, our tonga in the river, ourselves wet and muddy, and all our goods on the other side of a madly rushing stream. But the laughing villagers lent willing hands, the *gári* (cart) was dragged out, the horses were caught, the harness mended, the bullock carts were unloaded, and the *sámán* carried over at a shallower part of the stream; and after giving a *bakshish* (reward) to our helpers we were soon on the way.

On reaching camp, we found that the usual *parao* or halting place was untenable. The young mangoes were in sap, and the red ants, having formed busy highways from tree to tree, had preempted the grove. No one disputes a roadway more persistently or backs up his claim more effectually than the red ant; you can put up with the white ant, for he is satisfied with your tent flaps and shoe leather, but the red ant wants you. Of the neighbouring groves, one

was occupied, another dirty, and a third had no good shade; so that it was late before we finally found a suitable place beneath a group of old forest giants in the corner of a wheat-field, where, on a carpet of dried leaves, we erected our tents. We had the usual delay in procuring fire-wood and grass for the bulls. Though in the midst of trees, we dared not cut one; for every tree is valuable property in India, carefully detailed in the plan of the ground, and not to be destroyed without official permission; and, spite of being in a land of farmers, none would sell us grass, all supplies having to be procured, and sometimes only after long delay and much bickering, from the headman of the nearest village. If so desired, the Political Officer will provide us with an order on all headmen and *thánadárs* (police officers) to furnish us with what we need at market rates; but we prefer, if possible, not to identify ourselves with the secular power, or lend any colouring to the idea that Christianity is propagated by compulsion; as it is we are not infrequently suspected of being in Government pay. Along with the grass and wood came the village *chowkidárs* or guards, whom the Native States prefer we should employ against any would-be marauder. It was not in the security

of these however, but in the thought that we were the ambassadors of God, under His protection and on His mission, that, after a hastily prepared but hearty meal, and our evening prayer, we lay down to a dreamless sleep.

"Ab tak tū kyon sotā hai ?

Sūraj niklā, huā sawerā."

(Why doth slumber bind thine eyes,

And sleep thy senses steal?

When reddening beams, thwart eastern skies,

The rising sun reveal?)

It was the preachers at their morning hymn; but the music falls on already half-awakened senses, sleep is hastily dashed from the eyes, bedclothes are tossed aside, we step out into the cold, bracing air of a January morning, and another day's work is begun. In one respect the words of the Hindi lyric are not correct, for the sun is not yet risen when we throw aside the tent curtains and go out to our morning cup of tea. Around us however all is activity—the cloth has just been laid under a noble mango-tree, and, while the toast is preparing, the kettle sends out a cheery sound from above the camp-fire; back of the tent the horses are being groomed, and the bullock drivers are giving their animals a hasty meal, preparatory to leaving for

their homes; in the neighbouring tent the native preachers are at their devotions or preparing their bundles of tracts for the day's work.

The night had been cold and the tea, though not a very substantial preparation for half a day's work, was very welcome. Then followed a short service, mostly petition; and though the morning reveille to the waking village gods filled the air, and from the whitewashed mouth of the neighbouring temple glared the hideous lineaments of a heathen idol, while gaping unbelief looked incredulously on, never within holy cloister or cathedral walls did God seem nearer than at that altar beneath the mango-trees.

Dividing into two parties, each led by a missionary, we set out on a tour of the neighbouring villages. Down the main road between the cactus hedges, past early moving bullock carts, with drivers fast asleep on their loads, over the river by a bridge of stepping stones, up through the midst of the village cattle as they gathered for their journey junglewards, along the dusty trail of a herd of buffaloes, past the little hut where the potter was already fixing his first lump of wet clay to the wheel, we turned into the main street of the village, an uneven, winding roadway of various widths, lined with representatives of the

peasant crafts and trades. I need hardly tell you that the shop on the left belongs to the village blacksmith, for even though you might not recognise the fireplace sunk in the mud floor, nor the hand bellows made of two goatskins and worked by opening and shutting the hands, you could not mistake the man shoeing the over-turned bullock, or the grimy clothes of the assistant sitting on the poor animal's head, or the ring of manure-cake ashes, which tells that the day before he had been setting a tire. That row of grain baskets on the low mud verandah, flanked by a bag of salt and kerosene oil tins filled with *ghí* (butter), is the bunya's shop; you can see his fat, oily face bending over the leather-bound account book, figuring on who is next to be fleeced. The little box-like shop beyond, strewn with tin lamps, wooden combs, mirrors, brass trinkets and powders, belongs to the *Borah*, whose chief commodity is kerosene, the Orient's ubiquitous illuminant, and whose empty tins form one of the Orient's most useful friends, being made into everything from drinking cups to shop doors. In the big, two-storied place over the way, whose floors are spread with cushions, sits *Mahájan* (money-lender) buttoning on his coat after his morning ablutions at the neighbouring

well; and the ash-clad man in front, with loin-cloth, necklace and begging bowl, is a wandering *sādhū* (ascetic), thankful even for the bad coins, by which the money-lender hopes to add to his chances for salvation. In the little shop next door, the goldsmith is getting ready his charcoal fire and blowpipe, for the *patel* (headman) of a neighbouring village has ordered an earring for his wife.

As we pass along we give each a greeting, inviting them to our meeting in the open square near the *kachahri*. This is the office of the *Ámín*, on whom, as head of the district, we wish to call and pay our respects. We stop, on the way, at the village school, held on the teacher's verandah, to tell the schoolmaster about our evening meeting; and he makes us promise to come in the afternoon and see the boys. The gongs and drums have ceased ere we reach the temple, and presumably the god is now awake, for the priest is giving him his morning bath and offering of flowers, the more substantial gifts being devoted to the priest's own use. Like the majority of the temples in Nimar valley, it is dedicated to *Máhádev* (*Shíva*), and contains a phallic emblem and an image of *Anandí* the Bull.

By this time the whole village is life and

bustle. The herdsman is gathering the remaining cattle from their shelters on the verandahs or within the houses of their owners; the housewives with little palm-leaf brooms are sweeping out their homes, only to allow the filth, however, to gather at their less tidy neighbour's doorstep, or in the middle of the roadway; for sanitation of any kind, is a word the villager cannot spell; some of the younger women are away with their brass water-pots to the well, or for their morning bath to the village tank; others are still grinding at the mills, or making manure-cakes for next day's fuel. Of the men, some few are off to their work in the fields, but most, now the busy season is nearly over, sit warming themselves in the sun, thawing out the midnight cold, and midst spasmodic gossip, passing the *chilam* (pipe) solemnly from mouth to mouth. The village barber is on his rounds with razor and water-pot, attending to his patrons wherever found. A little group is gathered round the village sage and astrologer, an aged Brahmin bubbling over with Hindu lore. Except for the few better class boys, who are at school, most of the children are in evidence, some few basking in the sun between their fathers' knees, others munching scraps of cold *chapāti* (unleavened

cake), and many, especially the girls, running in the tracks of the cattle to gather material for the family fuel.

Could we get behind the walls and see within these homes, a plain interior would meet our eyes. Some houses of the shopkeepers and officials are double-storied and whitewashed, but in most villages these are not to be found. The well-to-do farmer has his courtyard, with perhaps a terraced tree in the centre, a shed for his cattle and implements, and the rest divided off into living and store rooms. In this valley, where so many peoples have met, there is little conformity, but most of the homes are simple, with but one, it may be two rooms and a verandah. The house is usually clean; a rude stone mill occupies one corner, the mud fireplace another, and a few brass vessels stand against the wall; a box for extra clothing and the rolls of bedding, consisting of grass mat and quilted cotton rugs, complete the furnishings. In some houses there is a basket or clay receptacle for grain, or a small pyramid of earthen pots; and some few give a niche to their favourite god or hang his picture on the wall.

It had been our intention to call on the *Ámín*, who in this village took precedence of the ordi-

nary *patel*, and hold our meeting on the village square in front of the *sarai* or travellers' rest house; but on turning round a corner, past the drink shop, with its black bottles and broken glasses set out on a brilliantly covered stool, in front of the liquor keg, we found the usually quiet verandah and low-roofed shop of the village carpenter crowded with men, seated in groups on floor, wood-pile or half-finished cart wheels, smoking and gossiping. We stopped to enquire and thus found our first audience.

III

A VILLAGE AUDIENCE

THERE had been a death in the carpenter's house and the caste people for miles around, to the number of about two hundred, had gathered for two or three days feasting.

What a strange anomaly and tyrannical autocrat is custom in India, lording it over conscience, intellect and even the fear of state decree. A few days before in a neighbouring village, a woman lay dying. "Why don't you get some medicine for her?" a Christian asked. "*Wáh, Bábá,*" replied the husband, "what can I do? I have no money." And for want of a few pice worth of medicine, he made no effort to save her. Upwards of two hundred people gathered to the funeral feast, which cost him some Rs. 750 (\$250), and for which, probably, he was obliged to mortgage not only all he was worth, but his productiveness for years to come, becoming in fact the virtual slave of the money-lender. And yet he dared not refuse; bound by a conservatism that counts it almost sacrilegious to change

the tools of his father's trade, the poor Hindu is the creature of custom. To all our counsels against extravagance at wedding and funeral feasts, there is one reply: "*dastūr hai*," (it is custom). From such a decision there is practically no appeal; whether it be good or bad, whether to advantage or disadvantage, the fact that it is the recognised custom is the final arbitrament.

The story is told of a village washerman, who, instead of dividing his bundle of clothes and laying it across his bullock's back, put all the clothes on one side, and balanced them by hanging a millstone on the other. When remonstrated with he replied, to the satisfaction of all, it is said, "It is the custom in our family, thus did my forefathers and so do I." With the Hindu what is, is right, the present cannot be superior to the past; the age of wisdom and plenty is in the memory of his forefathers, when the seas flowed with milk and sugar-cane juice, and the *rishis* (sages) talked with the gods. And so in every detail of life, whether it be in the more public ceremonies connected with marriage and death, or in the conducting of the ordinary, daily household affairs, the despot of custom holds uncontested sway. For the individual to fight it is to

contend with the sea; it is hoary with age, invincible in strength, bred into the very bone and sinew of Hindu society, and paralyses every instinct to change and progress.

The company gathered on the carpenter's verandah were all of one caste. No matter how closely his neighbours may have been associated with him from childhood, nor what charitable service may have bound them to him, he would no more think of inviting them to a feast than the aborigines roaming in the jungle; the guests were present by authority of their caste connection. If the Hindu's hands are tied by custom, his feet are bound by its fellow despot caste. Separated into an innumerable number of communities, which even in this little village would number more than a score, they cannot eat together, drink of the same vessel, intermarry or have any social relationship.

Caste exercises a social tyranny, its rigorous laws entering into every detail of life, "ordaining," says Dr. Wilson, "methods of sucking, sipping, drinking and eating; of washing, anointing; of clothing and ornamenting the body; of sitting, rising, reclining, moving, travelling, speaking, reading, etc. . . . It has laws for social and religious rights, privileges



OUR AUDIENCE IN THE MARKET PLACE.



THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER.

and occupations; . . . for errors, sins, transgressions. . . . It unfolds the way of committing what it calls sins, accumulating sin, and of putting away sin. . . . It interferes, in short, with all the relations and events of life, and with what precedes and follows, or what is supposed to precede and follow life. . . .”

Caste has its apologists, even without the pale of Hinduism; nor has it been without certain advantages, watching over the interests of those in its own guild, securing them from outside competition, and assuring by generations of heredity a certain excellence in labour; it has also been advocated on the ground of the sanitariness of its regulations and the respect it creates for those in authority. But though caste may have served a temporary purpose, perhaps a wise purpose, it has long ago passed beyond the stage of being an element in the development of the race, and become senile, corrupt and bigoted. It is the tool of the priests and religious leaders, the ready instrument of family quarrels and jealousies and the strongest opponent of Christianity. I have known a poor farmer, into whose well some passing stranger had dipped his drinking cup, compelled, because some jealous neighbour had reported him, not

only to have it emptied and purified by the Brahmins, but also to soothe the offended feelings of his caste by providing a ruinous feast. On another occasion, in one of our villages, a *pañchayat* (caste committee) met at the dictation of some religious fanatic, for some three days, to apportion punishment to a man whose ox had accidentally strangled itself in the stall. It is a common sight at railway stations or on the roadside, to see a man carefully polishing the outside of his *lota* (drinking cup) before drinking, without giving a thought to the cleanliness of the inside or the purity of the water. The treatment of Christian converts by such a system can well be imagined; they are refused, at least in the Native States, the use of the wells, are outcasted by their relatives, generally deprived of their means of livelihood, and subjected to innumerable petty persecutions.

Caste has its physical evils in early marriages and inbreeding; it hinders social and commercial intercourse; it is opposed to progress and general education, to individual liberty and national patriotism; it paralyses any outflow of generosity to those without its own community, fostering almost unparalleled selfishness. But its gravest fault is in the wrong perspective it gives of the

obligations and sanctities of life. While magnifying abnormally the petty peccadilloes against caste observances, it is practically blind to acts of sometimes gross immorality, of incontinence, untruth and injustice, especially against the members of other castes. Where such evils have been practiced with impunity, so far as they affect a man's caste relations, the taking of a glass of water from an European would have been visited with severe punishment. Practically the laws of caste, oftentimes undefined and representing merely the prejudices of a temporary *panchāyat*, have been set up in the place of conscience, and made to define the morality of India, a petty, selfish prejudice usurping the place of the Spirit of God. As Sir Henry Maine has well said, "Caste is the most disastrous and blighting of all human institutions."

Could we have entered into the lives of these village carpenters, gathered from many quarters, we would have found in them a remarkable sameness. Centuries of slavery to caste and custom have produced in the villagers of India a dull, colourless monotony of life and purpose, with no sparkle of individuality. Slow and easy-going, they take no account of time, chronicling events by some flood, famine or great ca-

tastrophe. Farmer or carpenter by caste, the thought of being anything else never enters their mind. They take life as it comes, joy or sorrow, plenty or poverty, with an indifference that is almost philosophical. "*Jo hogá so hogá*" (what will be will be) is their fatalistic explanation of every providence, leaving no room for ambition, perseverance in right or opposition to wrong. And yet if the Hindu has any ideal it is that he should be thought religious. He is a bigoted idolater, reverencing the very mud platform surrounding the ugly, red-painted, often shapeless stone, that stands for the village god; no one could be more punctilious in the observance of religious rites or more faithful in attendance on religious festivals; and his increasing desire, as he grows older, is to make a pilgrimage to one of the great religious shrines.

These paradoxes of his character find their explanation in a subtle pantheism, underlying all his religious thinking, which seems woven into the very warp and woof of his being, colouring not only every thought but every action. It obliterates the lines between moral good and evil, completely dulling the conscience. To him sin is not an offense against God, but the infringement of the conventionalities of caste; and sal-

vation is not a complete fellowship with God through the elimination of evil, but an absorption into *Brahma* through the obliteration of all the attributes of self-consciousness, moral and intellectual, whether good or evil.

Most varied have been the descriptions of Hindu character, from "the bravest of Asiatics, remarkable for simplicity and integrity," to those, among whom "there is no degree of cruelty, no excess of vice, no hardened profligacy, no ineffable abomination, of which we cannot find examples." Not only is there injustice, however, in the application of western standards to the East, but no general description of character would be true of the whole three hundred millions of India's people. There is much in them to be admired as well as much to be deplored. While industrious, patient, respectful to parents, charitable and, on the whole, free from the gross materialism of the West, their moral ideals are low; and the lack of truthfulness, honesty, mutual confidence and gratitude is so marked as to be accounted characteristic of the people. The degradation of woman, with all its immoral fruits, neglect of the poor, and tyranny on the part of those in power, are the natural outcome of a re-

ligion which sanctions gross impurities in its gods and the evils of caste.

But whether we view the Hindu from the standpoint of their needs or their potentialities, our responsibility is the same for giving them the only power which will supply the one or develop the other. Their characteristic faults are deep rooted, resting in their wrong conceptions of God and sin. So far from their religion being a spiritual dynamic to lift them upwards, it is mainly responsible for dragging them down. Ever substituting conformity to code for loyalty to principle, and the authority of the priesthood for that of conscience, Hinduism, except for occasional spasmodic efforts, has been a constant retrogression from the monotheism of the earliest Vedas to the gross polytheism of the Puranas.

The needs of the Hindu, however, are not summed up in new ideals, new views of God, sin, and man's relationship to God; his greatest need, as the many abortive attempts at regeneration on the part of Indian reformers have shown, is spiritual power—Life—Life as it is in Jesus Christ. And it is the revelation of this life, the gospel, which is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" for the Hindu as well as the Anglo-Saxon.

As we stopped on the roadway in front of the carpenter's shop, the crowd swarmed around us, doubtless attracted, in the first place, by the novel sight of my bicycle. We had no need to force our message; in fact it is a contradiction of terms to speak of "forcing the gospel"; if the propagation of Protestant Christianity is individualised by any principle, it is that of a personal and absolutely free acceptance. We neither enter their houses nor invade their temples, we do not flaunt our message defiantly in their sacred places; but standing on a street corner, or in the market-place, or seated by special invitation on one of their broad verandahs, in accordance with the custom of their own *gūrūs* (teachers) for ages, we expound our teaching. The gospel contains its own dynamic, and thrust like a loadstone into a village crowd, it draws around it those for whom it has some peculiar affinity.

The occasion of mourning suggested the subject of our talk. Nowhere is Hinduism a more terrible failure than in the presence of great grief; for these sorrowing people it had no hope; their loved one had passed on out of their ken, whirled upon the endless wheel of rebirths into a new sphere, where no memory of the past remained. But we did not talk to them of Hindu-

ism, or of the gods and their stony gaze, but of the great heart of God as revealed in the gift of His Son, of the death which conquered death, and of a life everlasting—the true *mukti* (salvation). It is not iconoclasm the Hindu needs, but a positive message, a glint of the sunshine of God's love, and an escape from the stifling atmosphere of his vain attempts at self-righteousness. And as we delivered unto them the message, "how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day," we could see an interest creeping over the faces of many. Some it may be were only curious, but that young man who has allowed the *chilam* (pipe) to pass unnoticed, that intelligent looking fellow who bids his neighbour be quiet while the padri sahib is speaking, and the old man with soul hunger in his eyes, who pauses on his errand at the outskirts of the crowd, have thoughts stirring within them that are secrets between them and God.

True it is difficult to get behind the stolid countenances of an oriental audience, to separate interest from curiosity and lay bare the thoughts of their hearts. To some such a service may seem as water spilled in the sand; they would

counsel us to train and teach, to lift men from their degradation, before committing unto them the oracles of God. But after all the general principles of mission methods are not so much a matter of opinion as of revelation. Life, as it is in Christ, is not a system of accretions, but a growth; it has its beginnings in the mystery of birth, springing out of an implanted seed. In the Galilean ministry of our Lord, in the service of the early apostles, whether among the Jews of Jerusalem or the idol-worshippers of Rome and the provinces, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." Doubtless some seed will fall by the wayside, and some on stony ground; but the work of the missionary is one of faith; we sow in all seasons and beside all waters, we have personal dealings with but few of those who hear us, we tabulate no results, we commit the interested ones to no church or society; we deliver the message and leave its germination to God.

After bidding farewell to the carpenters, we preached to two other audiences in different parts of the village, besides paying a visit to the *kachahri* to call on the *Ámin*. Where the villages are large, we often give the whole day, or two or three days, even a week, to one place;

but more frequently we are forced to reach several small villages in the same day. Although during the touring season, unless when traveling, we hold at least five, sometimes seven and more meetings a day, we do not bring more than ten per cent. of the villages, or six per cent. of the people within sound of the gospel during the whole year.

As far as possible, the preaching is followed up by the sale of tracts, the occasional visit of a native Christian and the recurring annual visit of the missionary. Even so, I have been forced to hear from the lips of the villagers themselves: "Padri Sahib, you come often enough to shake our faith in Hinduism and interest us in Christianity, but not enough to enable us to understand it." It is not ambition to cover large territory or preach to large numbers that takes us on these long tours; frequently we have personal invitations to visit distant centres; the Macedonian appeal seems ever beckoning us on, and the sleepless missionary spirit cannot rest while out in the regions beyond some soul may be waiting for the message.

Some would counsel us to confine our work to a limited number and teach these well. But who can confine the Spirit of God? On this

very morning as we left the carpenter's shop, a man came forward to greet us; he reminded us of our visit of two years before and the address we gave; it had taken such a hold on him, he could remember almost the whole of it. Another brought out the copy of a little tract he had bought on the same occasion, whose well thumbed pages showed how carefully it had been studied. Just a few days before, we had preached in a neighbouring village for the first time. At the close of our address the better part of our audience followed us out about a mile on the roadway to plead that we would return again soon. Among our preaching party on this very occasion, was a young man who had himself been arrested in a mad career, and finally brought to Christ, by just one such service in a distant village. Some of the brightest converts we have are the fruits of a chance visit to some distant village on the part of a missionary or native preacher. I have known the gospel preached almost weekly and even schools held continuously for upwards of fifteen years near to my own station with less result. On the other hand invitations to come and preach in some distant part of the field remain uncomplished with because of distance and lack of labourers.

It is in the face of such facts we have to solve the problem of the evangelisation of these districts. "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." The destiny wrapped up in one seed from the Word of God only He can reveal; the Pauls and Peters, who are to awaken India to a knowledge of God in Christ, may be waiting still in some village as yet untouched by the sound of the gospel. Ours is to obey the command and preach to all creatures, His to convict and choose the fruit. Moreover all are needy, Christ died for all, the bread may be little and the children many, but who will forbid that all should have a share?

IV

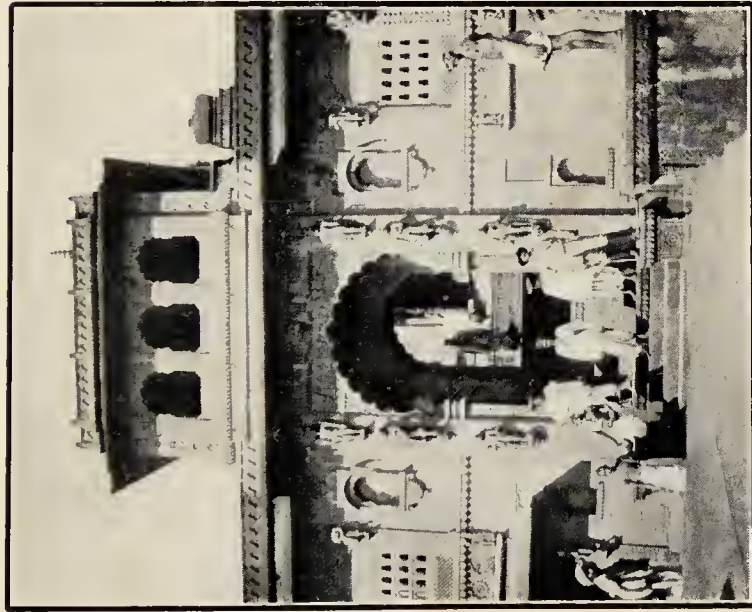
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MAHESHWAR is a *devsthán*—a place of the gods—and well it is named. Issuing out of the narrow roadway on to the riverside in front of the fortress of Ahilibai, a massive pile of palaces, turrets and temple domes, we seemed to have dropped into a very pantheon of the gods. Behind the beautiful temple doors above, attended and guarded by *Anandī* the bull, *Māhādev* (*Shív*), the spiritual lord of Nimar, represented by the forbidding *Linga*, sat enshrined in purest marble; on either side the great temple was flanked by lesser ones, crowded with hideous idols; down the broad stone terrace, that for nearly one hundred yards paved the *ghát* (platform) in front of the fortress, the eye swept along an almost unbroken row of shrines and images; even upon the beautiful stairway, which, like a fluted edging, runs the whole length of the terrace, leading the worshippers down to the lapping waters of the Nerbudda, idols had found their resting-place; at the street corners and in

the market-place of the town above, temple followed shrine in relieving the monotony of bunya and incense shops; and in the groves about our camp the temple bells clanged noisily, and well-fed priests muttered their solemn *mantras*—truly this was a place of the gods.

Yet with all that was heathenish, the riverside presented a beautiful scene. Far up behind the fortress walls perched the old palace of Ahilibai,¹ the renowned queen of the Holkar dynasty, whose reign was far famed for its justice of rule and its many public works. In front of this lay the temple, built for the eternal peace of her soul, a monument of carved stone, surrounded with beautiful gateways; and all fronted with a magnificent façade, a dream in sandstone of lattice-work and many pillared galleries, sweeping down a grand stairway on to the stone terrace of the *ghât* below. Up and down this stairway and

¹ The daughter-in-law of Mulhar Rao Holkar. This remarkable woman, when husband and son were both dead, asserted her right to reign, and for thirty years gave to the State of Indore a period of peace and prosperity. She took a great interest in her people, hearing all complaints in person, and was noted for her charity and devotion. She it was who built the city of Indore, and hewed out of hill and forest the great highway, which, from the present capital, leads over the brow of the Vindhya, through the Jam gate, down to the old capital of Maheshwar.



A PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE.



TEMPLE BUILT FOR THE ETERNAL PEACE
OF A QUEEN'S SOUL.

across the platform flitted white robed Brahmins; armed sepoy guards guarded each approach; while along the river steps thronged a crowd of busy women, chattering and laughing as they went about their duties, some at their ablutions, others washing clothes, but most coming and going to fill their shining brass water-pots, and all pausing as they passed to mutter a few words of worship at one of the many shrines. It was an ever-changing kaleidoscope of many hues and colours—shining vessels, laughing faces, bright fluttering garments and twinkling brown feet. But out on the river, their horned backs and protruding snouts lying like logs on the water, the hungry alligators waited for their prey, while up in the temples, behind latticed windows, watched the priests.

Idolatry has its apologists even to-day. The *Maratha*, a Hindu paper, says, "Even the most advanced reformer cannot pretend to say that every human being is capable of conceiving a formless divine being. Our ancestors perceived this and hence recommended different sorts of worship for different sorts of people. As in every other department, the law of evolution must be applied also in religion." What are the facts? There was a time, in the Vedic period of

Indian history, when idol worship was unknown, when, as one of her own sons says, "India sang the glory of the Eternal Spirit, the *Param Átmá*." But with the introduction of Puranic idolatry, with the attempt to clothe human images with divinity and change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, there came a fall. "As we roll down the stream of time," says Keshub Chunder Sen, "from ancient to modern India, we are indeed grieved to find how, amidst successive changes, a higher and purer faith has gradually degenerated into debasing forms of idolatry and superstition, and how, in consequence of the later corruptions of Hinduism, the country has gone down century after century in a course of moral and spiritual decadence." In the writings of Abbe Dubois one sees something of the degradation to which idolatry had brought India before the preaching of Christ began to stem the tide of her downward career. But even to-day what could be worse than *sakti* worship or the avowed practices of the *Máháráj* sect? What must be the effects of the worship of *Ganesha* as the god of wisdom, identified, as he is in the village mind, only with the puerile stories of his gluttony and how he gained his elephant head? What mis-

sionary has not known the awful fruits of *Krishna* worship, sanctioning by his foul example the grossest vice? What is the terrible effect upon the worshipper of bowing before the vile *Linga*? I have seen with my own eyes, I have known of things in this very town of Maheshwar, connected with this degrading form of the worship of Shiv that are too awful for description.

Instead of an evolution from idolatry, the history of religion in India would show a constant retrogression into worse forms of idolatry. It is an eternal principle that everything which comes between the worshipper and the one living and true God, whether it be philosophical system, ritual practices or an image, shuts out the worshipper from personal and quickening touch with God; and nowhere has the truth of this been more terribly exemplified than in India. Instead of lifting the Hindus up to God, idolatry has only dragged them down to a participation in the immoral and vicious practices of the gods whom they worship.

It is not easy perhaps for an outsider to be quite just in discussing an alien religion, even as to its idol-worship. One would like to think that there may be something behind even this monu-

mental folly of the human race that is struggling for light, seeking to touch the skirts of the divine. Doubtless there are some who see beyond the image some nebulous spiritual idea, in whose hearts is a sincere longing for God, but who find nothing beyond their idolatrous heritage through which to express it; others there are who, while they profess to see nothing in the image, cling to it simply from custom or through fear; and there are many, I rejoice to say an ever increasing number, who, in the light of purer Christian ideals, have boldly given up all idol-worship. But it cannot be denied that the great majority of India's people, especially in the villages, are real idolaters. Whatever hazy idea some of them may have of the all-pervading *Brahma*, their thoughts in worship do not rise beyond the idol itself. The very ceremony of *prân pratishthâ*, by which the piece of wood or stone is endued with divinity, points to this; the superstitious reverence which surrounds everything connected with the idol and its temple, finds in this its only full explanation; and many a time have I had it flung in my face: "These are our gods." And it is true; the monkey-faced *Hanumân*, the elephant-headed *Ganesha*, the vile *Linga*, the shapeless *Mâtâ Devi*, the licen-

tious *Krishna*, the bloodthirsty *Káli* and many million others, these are thy gods, O India!

Idolatry is not native to the Hindu, it is a cancerous growth, and there is no hope for India except in a relentless and entire crushing out of the whole system as a foul disease. Well said the founder of the Brahmo Somaj, already quoted, "There can be no doubt that the root of all the evils which afflict Hindu society, that which constitutes the chief cause of its degradation, is idolatry. Idolatry is the curse of Hindustan, the deadly canker that has eaten into the vitals of native society. . . . It will not do to retain in the mind a speculative and passive belief in its dogmas; you must practically break with it as a dangerous sin and an abomination. You must give it up altogether as an unclean thing. You must discountenance it, discourage it, oppose it, and hunt it out of your country."

It was seldom the people of Maheshwar saw an European, and many years since they had been visited by a missionary; yet there was a suspicion about the ignorance of this village crowd, and a hostility in their demeanour, which seemed peculiar to this god-ridden atmosphere. The uncouth soldiers shouted at us as we crossed the platform, the priests' satellites showered

orders till we were in a maze, and I had to call the most clamorous of them aside and tell him that we would be glad to hear anything they had to say, in a gentler tone, but that we were neither dogs nor cattle.

The objection to us was not on account of our being missionaries; few, if any, knew the purpose of our visit. The trouble arose from the suspicions of the priests; we were strangers and of an alien religion, whose advent would disturb their superstitious hold on the people; and they feared us as the darkness dreads the light. It appeared that there were certain regulations as to where men wearing boots should walk; and though we had observed many of the Hindus defiling the sacred places with their shoe leather, before we were called in question, we were not desirous of in any way infringing on the rules. But simple obedience was not enough, and some of the coarser in the crowd would have hunted us out of the place; when I mentioned that we had come to see the *Ámín*, and, drawing out my note-book, asked for their names. This was sufficient, the objectors drew away, and some of the more courteous in the crowd showed us the way to the *Ámín's* house, which was situated in the fortress. We found him in his *daftar*, a

broad room with many quaintly carved windows, and walls decorated in blue and yellow with impossible horses and elephants. The carved wooden pillars that supported the low roof divided it off into sections, in one of which the object of our quest, clothed in immaculate white, was seated dictating to his clerk. The sepoy at the door would have made us take off our boots to enter "The Presence"; but the *Ámín* himself coming forward to welcome us, ordered out a couch and bade us be seated. Short, but well-proportioned, with a handsome, agreeable face, he was a good-natured, pleasant spoken man, in whom we soon realised that we had found a friend. He talked to us freely about a visit he had once paid to Europe with the Holkar, and seemed interested in our coming and our work, asking us to hold a meeting in his house. Like many of the more thoughtful of even the village people, he was beginning to feel the shadow of the inevitable when the Nazarene would displace the grinning gods of the temple below.

But the temper of the *Ámín* was not reflected by the people of the bazaar. We returned to the market-place to find the Christian preachers the centre of a gesticulating, howling mob, who were threatening them with clubs and stones.

Evidently the priests had been at work, for we could see their clean-shaven heads, with broad *tika*¹ marks, conspicuous among the leaders of the rabble. The wretched sepoy were powerless, and stood idly by, evidently sympathising with the crowd. It may be our men were not sufficiently tactful, or perhaps their position was not well chosen, in the open market-place and so near a temple; but there was a malignity about this opposition that had in it the bitterness of ignorant hatred for the name of Christ. When we appeared, the vituperation was turned on us. I got our little party to one side and sought to draw around us the less unfriendly, telling them we had come neither to injure them nor curse their gods, but to give them a message we had brought from far over the "black water." But neither respect for our request, the presence of my wife, nor the curiosity of the crowd could stop the malignity of the Brahmin clique and their followers. One of them, bursting with a venom of hate, came close up, and, shaking his stick, hissed out a threat to lead a mob to our tents and destroy them and us. We were not afraid, but it was evident our message was not wanted nor was a howling mob, armed

¹ Marks on the forehead signifying religious cult.

with stones and clubs, and poisoned with prejudice, a likely soil for receiving the Word. We gradually withdrew, the mob following us, hooting and threatening, to the very gates.

And here, without the gates, we found our work. Every town and village in India has its poor quarter, usually a collection of rude, thatched huts, the homes of the *Chamárs* or leather workers, the *Mángs*, the *Mahárs* and the *Bhalais*, the labouring or coolie classes, who form the great commonalty of India. It is not their poverty, however, which causes their separation, for among them are some who have accumulated wealth and built good houses, even temples, for themselves; but they are below that sharp line of demarkation which distinguishes high from low; they are the outcasted, the ignorant, degraded and superstitious masses, who are despised by the higher castes, denied many of the commonest rights of man, and deprived almost of hope both here and hereafter.

A little way outside the gate we came on a group of *Bhalais*, beneath a *ním* tree in front of the shoemaker's shop, idly gossiping after their morning's work in the fields. They had no sympathy with the disturbance in the city. In their own way they were probably just as

bigoted and even more ignorant, but their world was a different one, and the high caste quarrels were none of theirs.

"Would you like to hear us sing?" I asked, after the usual greetings.

"Yes, Padri Sahib," came from several of them together.

So, squatting on the edge of the shoemaker's verandah, we sang for them that sweet lyric "*Yishú Masth.*"

"Will not the padri sahibs sing it again?" they asked, when we were through. So again we sang to them:

*"Yishú Masth mero prāna bachaiyā,
Jo pāpi Yishú kane āwe
Yishú hai wāki mukt i karaiyā."
(Jesus saves my soul.
Let sinners come, whoever will,
Christ will make them whole.)*

How wonderful is the power of song. Their faces lit up and eyes glistened as we sang over and over again the glad refrain "Jesus saves my soul"; and a sad look of reality and longing stole over them at the words:

*"Gahiri wuh nad iyā nāwa purānī,
Yishú hai mero pāra karaiyā."
(The stream is deep, the boat is old,
But Jesus bears us over.)*

Song after song we sang to an audience that never seemed to grow tired, even the women crowding out from the neighbouring doorways. After each song we explained its meaning, but none seemed to have the power of the first; "Jesus saves my soul" was their favourite, and before we left we had to sing it again. Thus feathered with song was the gospel message shot home to their simple hearts; and with the refrain ringing in their ears, we left them to the message and God.

Not only did I think it inadvisable, after the display against us in the bazaar, even to accept the *Ámín's* invitation, but my wife was taken suddenly ill, and before we had time for another service, we had to pack up and hurry back to Mhow, driving all night through the deep, dark jungle, with only a lantern to pick out the way. It was a full year before we again visited this place of the gods. As we were putting up our tents under a wide-spreading mango-tree, in the grove outside the city, we suddenly heard away down the river the voice of singing. As it approached nearer we could recognise the refrain, and soon the full song burst upon our ears, "*Yishú Masíh mero prána bachaiyá*" (Jesus saves my soul). It was the

voice of one of the young men to whom, when spurned by priest and Brahmin, we had turned and taught the gospel. The song had lived, as only Christian song can live, to blossom out in God's own time into glad new life.

On this occasion we remained three days in Maheshwar, working quietly through the bazaars and among the separate castes in their own *ma-hallas* (districts). We made many friends, even among the Brahmins, several of whom, including the *Ámín*, visited us at our camp. Our old friends, the *Bhalais*, their duties in the fields being somewhat slackened, were glad to see us, and we had many talks with them and their neighbours, the *Chamárs*, about the New Way. One old man who remembered well a visit payed years before by Campbell Sahib, seemed to have got a clear hold of the truth; but custom and the ties of caste had grown strong with years, and though he set his face against the follies of Hinduism, he did not seem willing to go further.

On our third visit we brought the gospel tent. This was a large, disused mess tent, with two poles, a ridge and detachable sides; and was capable of seating 200 or more within, and, with one side open, two or even three times that

number within hearing distance without. It gave us the great advantage of having the meetings more directly under our own control; people were quieter, stayed longer, and were more attentive, when comfortably seated on our big cotton rugs, with the two tent lanterns burning brightly overhead, the organ playing and the whole meeting more of the nature of an invitation to our home. Then it was more exclusive; while we always made arrangement so that the low-caste people, and even the women, had their places, we could insist on quietness and eject those who were bent on disturbance. From the *Ámin* we obtained permission to erect it in a vacant space just outside the gate. And here, for a week, we gathered day and night crowds numbering sometimes from 500 to 800 people, who, with but few exceptions, and these were generally overawed by the rest, gave us the closest attention while we told them the story of the Cross.

On the last evening we held a plain gospel meeting, without either lantern or pictures. There were probably 600 people present, seated, as many as possible, inside, but more outside the tent. There was some noise and a little disorder in getting the audience seated, but as soon

as the strains of the organ arose and the singing began, everything grew quiet, except for a few Mohammedan youths evidently bent on mischief. Our subject for the evening was the life and work of Christ; one after another our little band rose and told in simple words the wonderful story, no one being allowed to speak so long as to tire the audience. While they spoke the tent lanterns lit up a touching scene; from the midst of keen brown faces, and from beneath many varied turbans, the broad red puggarees of the Brahmins, the nondescript headgear of the crowd, and the apologetic strip of cotton crowning the head of the urchin, there looked up sharp intelligent eyes that seemed to tell of souls awakening, as though the Christ Message had struck a slumbering chord. In the midst of the meeting the Mohammedan *badmashes* (rowdies) made a determined attempt to stampede the audience; but the Spirit was there in power and they got little or no following; it just served to sift the audience. We had no means of measuring the interest, but what could speak more plainly than that this ignorant, prejudiced, village mob should sit and listen for the better part of an hour to a story that had nothing in it of jest or amusement or of the gossip of the market-

place? Surely in this place of the gods, behind all the multiplicity of idols, there was a great desire after the truth, and a soul hunger on the part of some for a view of God that would fill up their vision and satisfy their hearts.

The next morning one of the town officials, a Mohammedan, sent a present over to me asking that I would call and see him. "I want to tell thee, Padri Sahib," he said, "how much I believe in what thou dost preach and what happiness it would give me to see one of thy disciples established here to teach the people about the Christ." He then offered not only to help us get a house but to pay something towards the wages of such a teacher, if I would send him in. But it was impossible; I had already more outstations than I could properly supply, and I could simply promise to pass the offer on to the Church at home that controlled the supply.

The crowning victory, however, came a year later, when one evening upon the same market square, that had first witnessed our disheartening defeat, the Christian preachers gathered a congregation of over a thousand people. It was a clear, cold night in January, and the darkened street was thronged on both sides of the magic-lantern sheet; some were seated on the shop

verandahs, some in carts, some even on the steps of the temple, but most were standing in the open roadway. No single voice could reach such a crowd; so one on one side of the sheet, and another on the other, our men preached for over an hour the same Old Story, and to the same people who a few years before had been so eager to murder them. There was no attempt at interruption; out in the still night air they stood, a mass of dark upturned faces, as if some strange hypnotic influence had bewitched them; while, picture after picture, the Bible scenes were flashed before them and their story unfolded. The fury of hate had broken down, opposition had been overcome, and the attention of the people gained. Doubtless, hatred still remained, the priests looked down from behind the latticed windows no more sympathetically; but without force or threatening, without the intervention of human power, the sympathy of the people had been gained—the Nazarene had conquered.

Some short time afterwards I had the privilege of receiving into the Church of Christ one of the *Bhalais* from Maheshwar, the “Place of the Gods.” It was the young man of the song—Jesus Christ had saved his soul.

V

UNDER THE MANGO-TREES

THE heavy morning's work was over; we had just risen from our late breakfast of *daliya*, *dál* and rice; and now, seated in the shelter of our tent beneath the mango-trees, were giving ourselves to rest and the drowsy scene before us. The tide of noon was just on the turn and one could almost hear the solemn set of day. It brought out into sharper contrast the hum of insect life, the occasional caw of a disturbed crow, the deep gutturals of the field labourers and the shriller and more peremptory commands of the women. Just beyond the thorny hedge, that fronted the mango-grove, the bullock carts jolted lazily along the sunken jungle track, the glint of the red turbans and many coloured *sárís* of their occupants bobbing up and down in unison with the ruts of the roadway; while away beyond, the fields of *jowár* and *alsí*, cotton and *sannú*, varied by occasional patches of opium and garden stuff, bathed themselves in the molten sunshine. Groups of curious children in their still

more curious garments hung around the camp, discussing in eager tones the advent and belongings of the white strangers. Save for the scratching of my pen and the rustling of a newspaper in the neighbouring tent, the camp itself was at rest, the native brethren enjoying a well earned sleep after the morning's long and dusty tramp.

"Sahib," I looked up from my writing to see one of the Christian preachers before me. "Is it time for the class?" It is our custom to spend an hour every afternoon in camp over some Bible study with the native workers, following the course laid down by Presbytery. Before the lesson was more than half over visitors were announced from the village, the schoolmaster and several Brahmin officials. On going out I found them waiting on the outskirts of the camp to be invited to come near. Very picturesque they appeared in their clean white garments, broad Maratha turbans and silk scarfs, as they stood out in bold relief against the foliage. But it was not this that riveted attention so much as the look of intelligence and assurance, mingled with a sort of unconscious, childlike ignorance that was depicted on their faces.

There is no class of India's people to whom

the mind of all who are interested in her destiny more instinctively turns than the educated Brahmins. Keen and subtle of thought, with remarkable penetration and retentiveness, these high-caste Hindus are intellectually one of the most potential classes in human society. Proportionately they are not numerous; the whole Brahmin community does not number ten per cent. of the population and only a section of these is educated; the whole college and high school attendance for India being only twenty one-hundredth per cent. of the school going age. But if few in proportion they are still large in numbers. There are more students in attendance on the universities and colleges of India than at all the colleges of Great Britain. Moreover they have a far more than proportional influence. It is too early to speak of leaders among the Christians of India, and they may yet be chosen from the *Chamárs* (tanners) and fishermen; but this we do know that the converted Brahmin will be a man of influence and power. He is more difficult to reach, more barriers have to be overcome, more prejudices met; but the fruit, however difficult to obtain, is well worth the effort. We can afford to be indifferent to his pride and scorn, to bear with his egotism and conceit and be patient with his

many follies and weaknesses, for the intelligent Brahmin, truly converted, will be power for Christ's kingdom. This community appeals to us, moreover, not only from the standpoint of their possibilities, but of their needs. As a class, they lack virility and moral stamina; they are moved by no inflexible, eternal purpose; they are still either bound to the wheel of a fatalistic inheritance of caste rule and custom, or are out on the sea of life, like driftwood, the plaything of circumstances, the children of fate.

Unlike the ordinary villager, however, the educated Hindu is difficult to reach. He makes a poor street listener; pride of birth and position forbids his herding with the common crowd, while consciousness of superiority shuts him out from accepting the simplicity which appeals to ordinary minds. He must be reached in some other way. It is a mistake, however, to imagine that the Brahmin is not open to direct religious influences, that he will not listen to a gospel address or converse as to his religious condition. Some of the brightest gospel meetings I have attended in India have been among the educated classes; and I have found no class more sympathetic in private conversation concerning the deep things of life and our relation to God.

Though they do not attend our street preaching, they gladly come to the magic lantern meetings and to services specially arranged for them; and at most of the large places we visit on tour they come to talk with us at our tents.

While I went forward to welcome our visitors one of the helpers brought out our few camp-chairs; but as there were not enough to go around, they refused to be seated without me, until we compromised by bringing out one of the camp-beds. It is not always easy to tell just the object of such visits; the Hindu does not state his business, it must be drawn from him. It may be simply curiosity to see the baby organ or to be photographed, it may be a desire to practice English or solicit our influence with some official; some, however, come to talk of the things concerning God, and for the sake of these we welcome all.

Before we could get down to a satisfactory talk on religion it was necessary to locate our visitors. Even in this distant village, where the educated community numbered not more than half a score, various religious opinions were represented. The schoolmaster, I found, belonged to the Arya Somaj, the compounder from the Native dispensary talked of Neo-Hinduism,

while the others vacillated between these and orthodoxy. The religious thought of educated India is a restless, storm-tossed sea. Great forces have been at work: a beneficent Government, contact with Europe and western ideas, the flood of English literature first let loose by Carey and his followers, but above all a century of the teaching of Jesus have wrought havoc with many of her ideas. She has broken from superstitions and prejudices hoary with the slavish service of ages; she has become ashamed of her idolatry and the grosser ceremonies of her religion; she has been awakened to higher ideals and the expurgation from her religious thought and teaching of the corrupt accretions of later centuries. "Back to the Vedas" is the cry of her religious leaders, who are seeking to build out of the philosophy of the past a new religion suited to the needs of the present.

Spite however of these changes, the heart of Hinduism has not been renewed; the same old eclectic spirit remains, that sucked at the breast of Buddhism and the animistic religions in turn, and that would fain place Christ in her pantheon along with *Râm* and *Krishna*. Hinduism is not the history of a great spiritual ideal, slowly developing and seizing upon the minds and hearts

of India's people; but rather the story of Brahmin subtlety, whereby, in order not only to retain the allegiance of their own, but to woo into that allegiance each conquered people, they have departed from the loftier character of their Aryan forefathers, and, sacrificing integrity to speciousness, have corrupted the simpler and purer Vedic ideals, welding more firmly the bonds of caste, and ever adding fetich, idol or ceremony, according to the demands of its votaries. But what word can describe that multiform creation of Brahmin genius, with its subtle philosophies and puerile superstitions, its lofty ideals and revolting ceremonies, with its omniverous appetite that has sated itself upon the gods and superstitions of every people over whom she has obtained sway, till her beliefs are past systematising and her deities past reckoning? And just as when the humane element of Buddhism appealed to the hearts of India's people, the Brahmins incorporated this as part of their teaching and made Buddha an incarnation of *Vishnú*, so would orthodox Hinduism deal with Christianity to-day. Against this degraded Hinduism, however, many of the better minds of new India, fascinated with Christian ideals, are in revolt; and they seek in the literature of the Vedas those

purser ideals of God and righteousness that have grown up in their minds from contact with the life and spirit of Christ and His followers. A new meaning of the word "religion" is laying hold of them; contact with the West is revealing to them, as one of their own papers puts it, "that whilst an Englishman's religion consists in his faith in principles, the religion of a Hindu consists in conformity to custom"; and a hunger for the real is growing up in their hearts.

Nothing could be more discouraging, however, than the failure of these attempts to establish a pure and vital religion by an appeal to the past. The history of Hinduism reveals many attempts at reformation by a discarding of excrescences and a reestablishment of the past. "But" as the *Hindu*, a non-Christian paper, says, "Hindu Protestantism never made a lasting mark; and to-day, as ever in the centuries that have elapsed, the incubus of custom has blighted the prospects of the Hindu peoples and stood in the way of their coalescing into a nation sensible of their immense strength and power for good." Such an acknowledgment by one of themselves, of the futility of Hindu Protestant movements can only be interpreted as a growing conviction, on the part of those for whom it speaks, that it

is not within, not from any appeal to the past, that India's salvation is to arise. What the Hindu is toilsomely learning by many sad experiences is that though there is much that is beautiful, much that considered historically is truly marvellous in Vedic literature, it has no message of salvation, no life for the soul that is dead in sin. We must judge the Vedas not by their choicest fragments but by their general spirit. Dr. Caldwell says: "If any person reads the hymns of the Vedas for the first time, he will be struck with surprise at the utterly worldly, unethical, unspiritual tone by which they are generally pervaded." There is in them as Dr. MacDonald says, "no zeal for righteousness" nor for the glory of God. With all their attractiveness they leave the hungry soul unsatisfied; and it is this conviction that is slowly driving many in India to Christ.

Our visitors were not men of deep convictions; "getting on," which in their case meant government preferment, was perhaps the motive power of their lives; and yet they gave no little thought to questions of religion, nor were they at all reticent in talking about them. It would be impossible to give a succinct account of our conversation; the schoolmaster was spokesman, the

others only dropping an occasional word, and probably he had some idea of the impression he would make in suggesting the visit to our camp. The discussion, though interesting, was profitable rather in the opportunity it gave for pressing home acknowledged truths. It is marvellous how little even the educated Hindu really knows concerning either Vedic literature or the history of Hinduism, beyond the stories of the *Ramáyana* and *Máhábhárata*, the *mantras* he has learned from the family priest and what he has picked up from discussions or the native press. But he is strongly moved by jealousy for Hindu traditions and a sort of false patriotism, that often-times make him openly hostile to the aggressive propaganda of Christianity: the distinctive feature of the Arya Somaj preaching in these villages was opposition to Christianity. Others however, convinced, perhaps in spite of themselves, of the ethical truth of Christianity, and the beauty of the character of Christ, attempt rather a defence of Hinduism by showing in how many ways it parallels Christianity. That there are many affinities between Hinduism and Christianity no careful student will deny, some which, so far as can be traced, are of independent origin in both, and others which it is claimed Hinduism

owes to Christian influence. Such points of contact are to be found in the doctrines of incarnation, vicarious atonement, immortality, future rewards and punishments and others. In fact almost every outstanding feature of Hinduism contains a truth, more or less exaggerated and almost invariably perverted to some ulterior end. Religion in India is like the ever-changing scenes of a kaleidoscope; sublime spiritual thought is often found side by side with debasing ritual and gross sensuality. The same system that has fed the lust of the debauchee has, with deep subtlety, been given some mystic significance for the spiritual devotee.

Although the schoolmaster was somewhat indefinite in his ideas of Hinduism, his shrewdness was quick to detect anything of the nature of affinity, and the spirit of enquiry was at work. Like the rest of his compatriots he was jealous also for the traditional religion and prompt to resent any lack of justice towards it. I fear that oftentimes we missionaries, impressed with the awful contrast between the grosser side of Hinduism and Christian morality, have been slow to discern and acknowledge its hidden truths. The cause of Christ has everything to gain from such an acknowledgment. Exaggerated views as to

the potential good in Hinduism and its relative merits and demerits have crept into western literature, which can be corrected only by a clear setting forth of these truths from a Christian standpoint. Moreover it is most essential that the missionary especially should have a clear idea as to the Hindu's view-point; while injustice to the traditions of her religion will only bar the way to the hearts of India's people, nothing perhaps will more quickly convince them as to the absolute insufficiency of Hinduism, than a clear setting forth of its truth and untruth and the great contrast between its general view-point and that of Christianity. We must lead the Hindu to see that though there are great truths in Hinduism, they are only partial and perverted, and that even separated from the grosser accretions of later centuries, they contain in themselves no dynamic for solving the great problems of sin and salvation, no divine Man to lead the way to God. They are but water in a stagnant pool, which will be of service only when they have been distilled in the alembic of the Sun of Righteousness.

Though our visitors posed as enlightened and reformed, we could not but notice many mannerisms paying unconscious tribute to custom

and caste. The tone of voice towards the servant, the unconscious drawing aside of the garments as he passed, showed that the same spirit of intolerance still dominated their actions, the same intellectual conceit and pride in their Brahminical traditions still blocked the way to their spiritual welfare. The fact is the educated Hindu leads a double life. That he is captivated by the intellectual and spiritual atmosphere of the dominant race is best attested by his many efforts at imitation; he speaks English on every occasion, even to his fellows; he is in many cases fairly well acquainted with English thought and literature; he is opposed to the gross incongruities of Hindu life; and is an advocate of social as well as religious reform. But there is another side to his life; very few of the women are drawn up even within sight of his public level; and so in the home, where some ignorant mother's or grandmother's prejudice and superstition are law, he must sink down to theirs, practicing in private the very absurdities he so unsparingly denounces in public. Woman, for so many years depressed, is unconsciously having her revenge, and upon her salvation depends the welfare of her sons; for India, like the rest of the world, will never rise higher than the level

of her women. The resultant character of such a double life is not hopeful, but it defines the struggle; caste prejudice, ignorant superstition, Brahmin pride, and intellectual conceit on the one side, with an innate desire for something better and all the forces that go to fulfill that desire on the other.

A wave of pity swept over us as we talked with our visitors. They had all the miserable heritage of the past against them; the fatal glamour of a pantheistic philosophy and the spell of caste prejudice were woven into the very fibre of their being, paralysing every tendency to personal dealing with God or the exercise of freedom; to them religion had always been a round of punctilious observances, God was an idea and truth a name. And yet there was much that was hopeful in their outlook; the very Christian ethics which the cults they represented had appropriated as their own, presented them with ideals that, spite of their Vedic labels, were potential with revolution both social and religious; some of them, too, had been in contact with Christian teaching in the Mission schools, and were not unacquainted with the gospel story. But the educated Hindu is neither to be argued nor drilled into the Christian faith, there is no

translation for the word "responsibility" in his vocabulary, and with his fatalistic view of life, he has no theological fears nor does an appeal to the danger of his position touch him; he will be won when he is won by the invincible attractiveness of the personality of Christ.

Perhaps our talk did not produce conviction, but it did not lower their ideals; we sought to bring them into touch with Christ; and that something of His spirit had caught and dominated their feelings towards us and our message we were made to feel by an act of friendliness on the following day. Our Brahmin friends invited us to a feast. The hosts' accommodation was small but they made up for it by the warmth of their hospitality. We were received in a small room not six feet square, whose mud walls were decorated with coloured designs of impossible men and animals; together with a few prints from some English newspaper. A native carpet covered part of the floor, while an English lamp and a couple of chairs showed the inevitable march of Anglicising influences. Soon the *khāna* (meal) was announced; and, escorted by our hosts, we proceeded to a long, low room, void of any furniture except a few stools not more than four inches high, and on which we were

seated while we ate our meal off plates of dried leaves, laid out on the newly plastered floor. Our hosts, though caste forbade them eating, waited on us with their own hands. A description of the food would be almost unintelligible to an English reader; needless to say the menu included no meats, but consisted mainly of curries, rice, breadstuffs fried in *ghí* (butter) and all served cold. These were followed by various kinds of sweetmeats, some quite tasty. After the feast was over we adjourned to the little room, where *pán supári* (betel nut) was served and we were decorated with garlands of jasmine and roses. Native food is not always to English taste, but the condiment that made all palatable was the evident desire on the part of our friends to make us welcome and do us honour.

The heart goes out after such young men, with their immense possibilities, and one cannot but feel that little after all is being done for them. Some are reached by the institutions of higher learning; but when we realise that out of the twenty-four colleges in Calcutta only four are missionary, and of the twenty-one colleges and professional schools in Bombay Presidency only two are Christian, we see what an immense pro-

portion of even the student population are away from such contact, to say nothing of the immense numbers who have either passed beyond school influence or whose whole training has been at secular institutions. What is wanted is a special evangelistic propaganda for the educated classes along the lines adopted by the foreign department of the Y. M. C. A. in the presidency cities:—special meetings to reach those who are not met by the ordinary evangelistic methods, only reaching out as far as possible into every town and village. Upwards of 3,000,000 of these young men speak English and could be reached through that medium. Surely here is an opportunity worthy of more of the leaders of Christian thought in the home lands giving at least a portion of their time to India's evangelisation, as has already been so fruitfully done by the lectures on the Haskell foundation. The hopes for this work cannot be better expressed than in the words of the founder of one of their own sects, Keshub Chunder Sen, —“All India must believe that Christ is the Son of God. Nay, more than this, I will make myself bold to prophesy, all India will one day acknowledge Jesus Christ as the atonement, the universal atonement for all mankind. He has given His precious blood for all of us whether we

believe it or not. . . . He has done His work, let us do ours. Let us believe that He has died for you and me, and the atonement on our side is completed."

VI

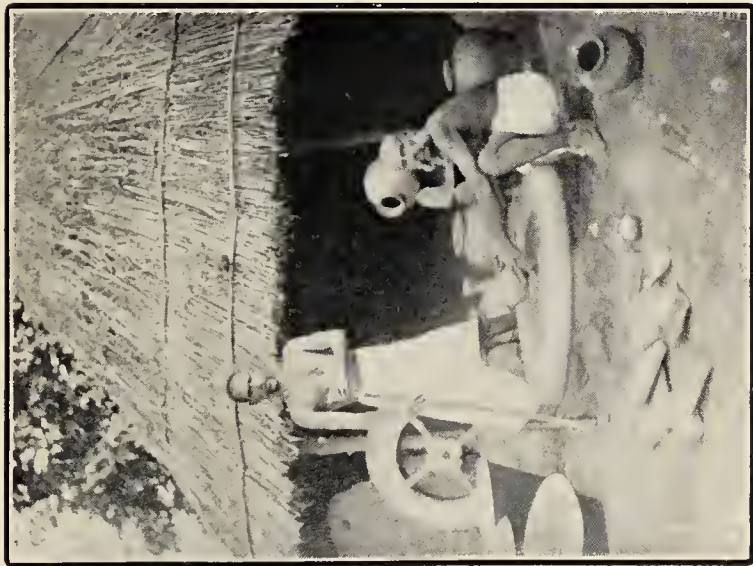
NIGHT WORK IN THE BAZAAR

THE Indian village is a microcosm, a little world in itself, independent, and, save for a few articles of commerce, self-contained. It consists of two straggling lines of rude, tile-roofed houses facing the roadway and main artery of traffic, with, it may be, a few side streets leading off to groups of still simpler structures, the homes of the low-caste labouring classes, who form the larger part of the village community. Round about it are grouped the village pond or tank, wells, groves and fields, the title to the latter being hereditary with the cultivators, who pay rental, according to the productiveness of the soil, to the *Zamindâr* or landed proprietor of the district, as representing the central power. In addition to the field-labourers, the population consists of a group of agriculturists with their *patel*, *patwâri* (accountant), shopkeepers, carpenter, blacksmith, barber and watchman, each working for and dependent on the rest. The affairs of the village are managed by the hered-

itary headman, his assistant officials and council or *pancháyat*, with reference in criminal cases to the central authority.

From time immemorial the village has been India's political unit, the oldest of her monuments. Where cities of palaces have fallen and crumbled away, the ruined village, phoenix-like, has reared again its mud walls and presented its red-tiled roofs to the sun and rains of heaven. In the heart of no man does the love of the spot where he was born seem more deeply rooted than in that of the Hindu; cases have been known of where, in troublous times, villagers, having been driven from their homes, have returned, after the second or third generation, and entered on the possession of their roofless walls and waste fields with as little litigation as though their absence had been that of a day.

Here also lies embalmed India's conservatism. One can see to-day, trailing out in the early morning across the oxen's yoke, the same rude plough that was used in the times of their Aryan forefathers; within the mud walls two women sit grinding at the same rude stone mills; the same fireplace and simple utensils, that make up the household furnishings, still line the walls;



POTTER AT WORK.



WOMAN GRINDING SPICE.

while their few wants are provided for in the same old way.

Standing at the village end in the early evening, watching the labourers gathering in from the fields and the cattle winding their dusty way from the distant jungle, with a babble of strange chattering voices buzzing in the ears, and a quickly-changing panorama of oriental colours flitting before the eyes, against a background of dull grey dust and mud, with here and there the glimpse of whitewashed walls or gaudily-hued temple, and in the distance the unskilled notes of some native instrument rising above the din, one can almost imagine himself dropped into some picture in *Arabian Nights*. This is the time when the village is all bustle and life. The fields without are deserted by man and beast, except for the prowling tiger, the panther and the howling jackal; but within the security of low mud walls, the tired villagers group themselves in happy gossip, awaiting eagerly the evening meal.

It is the impressionable time of the day, the hour which from time immemorial has been dedicated to the village pundit, to discourse on the beauties of the *Ramáyana* and *Máhābhārata*; and we missionaries have learned not to

neglect its opportunity. We cannot reach them with the same simple methods employed during the day; the ordinary preaching discourse would be unavailing in the dark bazaar; so we carry them the gospel by means of the Magic Lantern, which, with its coloured slides, has now become a recognised armament in the missionary campaign. The villager is fond of anything in the nature of a *tamasha*; he loves to see the changing colours on the sheet; the pictures aid his dull sense in understanding the unfamiliar story; and he will stand patiently for an hour or more in the chill atmosphere of the market-place to see and hear the gospel message. Usually, on entering a large town or village, we take a few photographs of familiar scenes, the bazaar, the temple, or a group of schoolboys and preparing slides at our tents, throw them upon the screen, much to the delight of the amazed villagers, who are led thereby to give all the more attention to the gospel pictures. These lantern talks are full of interest, and the scenes oftentimes indelibly impress the story on the childlike village mind. I have known an ignorant, jungle Bhil, who, after much persuasion had been lured by curiosity to the neighbouring village, and with awe-struck features sat in perfect silence drinking in

the story of some wonderful picture, tell over the substance of it again a year later.

It is marvellous the widespread fascination of the lantern meeting; dignified officials, who would not deign to pause and listen to a bazaar talk, will have their chairs brought out and give close attention to the explanation of the pictures. I remember one evening a number of haughty Brahmins so eager to be present at our meeting as to sit down under the shelter of the darkness, with low-caste *Chamárs* and on the latter's verandah; and as I have already said even timid hill-men have several times been drawn out, through the darkness, from their jungle homes, to watch the magic pictures. Almost the first request, when we encamp in a village, is for the lantern, young and old crowding round us on our entering the bazaar to ask if we are not going to show them the pictures. The meeting is usually announced not only in the main bazaar but in the neighbouring villages; and no means has proved as successful for gathering large crowds, sometimes six and eight hundred, even a thousand strong, nor as powerful in holding their attention and fixing the gospel stories on their mind. In all our methods the aim is the same, to give

men a vision of Christ; and in the lantern talks we touch the Hindu, with his strong love for imagery and the picturesque, in his most susceptible point.

Among our afternoon visitors on one occasion was the Rao Sahib or *Ámín*; and as we had promised to return his call in the evening, we left for our lantern meeting a little early. On the way we passed a marriage procession; laughing maidens in red, blue and orange *sárís*, singing their merry love songs, sober matrons bearing on their heads trays of sweetmeats and gaily coloured cloths, bashful youths in their ill-fitting finery and staid old men. In front walked the groom, a weakly-looking man of about twenty-eight years, the least attractive individual in the group, spite of his gay trappings. But where was the bride? Following the scarf that bound her to her future husband, we saw, nestling in her mother's arms, all unsuspecting of the cruel and binding destinies that were being woven round her young life, a wee babe not more than a year old; she was the unfortunate bride. And this unnatural, and to them eternal union, was being forged by the cruel monster custom at the bidding of vain superstition, or, it may be, for the gratification of human passion. It is strange, but to

our remonstrances the women themselves are the most zealous defenders of this appalling custom. It would sometimes seem as if the misery of Christless womanhood only bred in them a desire to perpetuate it in those who have to follow; the years of her bondage have wrought their own permanence.

The procession was on its way to make an offering at a shrine on the neighbouring hilltop, for heathenism loves high places and lots of noise. The clang of discordant gongs and the rumble of the big drums as we passed the temple, where the gods were being put to sleep for the night, almost deafened us. The Rao Sahib was expecting us and *chaprâssis* with very faded insignia, but colossal importance, shouted officiously to the bystanders as they escorted us up to the gateway and through a garden sweet with the smell of ripening oranges and pomaloes. The way led out of the courtyard, across the wide verandah of the sombre *kachahri*, where Brahmin clerks drove their reed pens, or sanded the finished page, all the more assiduously because of the passing *sâhib log*, along a dark mud-floored passage, through the cow's stable, up a narrow break-neck stairway, impenetrable to a ray of light, and into the reception room. Our

host had asked his music teacher to come and play for us, and very sweet were some of his melodies spite of the brass strings of the *sitára*. He also had tea prepared, but I failed to recognise the blend. The educated Hindu is exceedingly courteous, and our friend not only entertained us with some of his experiences, but accompanied us to the meeting in the bazaar.

Our men had set up the sheet, by means of its heavy teak-wood frame, in the broad street used as a market-place, and there was no little coughing and sneezing as the shuffling feet of the gathering throng, which already numbered about 300, raised the pepper-laden dust. But all soon settled down; it was a clear, cool night, with no moon to "melt" the pictures; the light, though we used only an oil lamp was good; and far as the reflection carried, eager, bronzed faces focused six hundred eyes on the magic-painted canvas; even the women thronged the neighbouring verandahs, anxious not to miss the Padri Sahib's *tamasha*.

To the stranger there probably seems no little danger in such an exhibition—the distant village, far away from the overawing influence of British power, the ignorant throng, with religious zeal quickly fanned into fanaticism, the darkness

covering any attempt at mischief, and we with our small numbers and delicate apparatus open at many points to attack. And yet we carry on these evening meetings in the villages of Central India, with less of apprehension than would be experienced on the streets of our cities at home. Probably no class of foreigners can go in and out of the villages of India with more impunity than the missionary. Though cases are not infrequently reported of British soldiers, and even officers, being attacked in the villages, in spite of their arms, such an experience is practically unknown among missionaries. We enter their bazaars at all seasons, either day or night, though we know that our audience will probably include the village rowdies; we do not hesitate to tell them of their faults and point out to them the evil of their customs; and we not only do not carry arms, but the thought of resistance does not even occur to us. What are the reasons for this immunity? In the first place it must be known that the religious messenger is treated with as much respect, by the better classes in India, as he would be under similar polemic circumstances at home. Unless it might be under some sudden impulse of fanaticism, his person is to them inviolate. To be sure our English citizenship must

be credited with some part of this respect, but that this cannot fully account for it, is seen by the British soldier sometimes being attacked where the missionary goes unscathed. I have stood before an angry and excited mob for over an hour, where, with the nearest British authority fifty miles away, fear could have moved them but little; I could account for being uninjured, spite of threats and violent gestures, only by my office and its message. Again the missionary understands the people and their ways, and speaks their language more freely than any other class; in all cases of trouble or emergency he is in closer touch with them and knows better how to handle their fears and passions. In the bread riots, during a late famine, it was a missionary who went down among the angry mob in one of our bazaars and did much to persuade the people from their unlawfulness. Moreover it is the missionary's business to be kind and helpful, and the people is yet unborn who are altogether inappreciative of kindness. In famine or sickness, in all kinds of distress, all classes of people naturally seek the missionary. Even the native grooms of the cavalry and artillery regiments in cantonment distinguish among the soldiers those who are kind to them, and significantly

call them padri-sahib (missionary) soldiers. In the bazaar no one is more respected or wields more moral influence than the missionary, and even among those who profess no interest in his message, he numbers many friends.

Certainly baptisms are resented, especially by the caste of the one received; but the resentment is more against the convert than the preacher. We are perfectly open about our purpose; and many, especially where their own family is not affected, are willing to admit liberty of conscience. Many also recognise that the inevitable destiny of India is to become Christianised. And even when, under some sudden excitement, the inflammable fanaticism of the masses bursts into a fury of ignorant hatred, the great majority still remain true to their respect for the missionary. Dissociated in the native mind from political aggression, and conducted in the long-suffering spirit of Christ, the missionary propaganda among the great nations of the East has little to fear of personal violence.

There was no evidence of either hatred or opposition in our village audience on this occasion. They were not only an interested but a happy crowd. The greater part of the village was out; shopkeeper rubbed against farm-labourer, Brah-

min against *Chamár*, in the abandon of a new *tamásha*, and under the shadow of uncommuni-
cative night. Some had climbed into empty bul-
lock carts by the side of the roadway, crowing
like schoolboys at their elevated position; others
had a coign of vantage both for seeing and hear-
ing in the raised verandahs of the shop fronts.
Among the latter were not a few women, many
of whose faces also peeped out eagerly from the
neighbouring doorways, some even venturing to
the outskirts of the crowd, their shrill though
subdued comments mingling occasionally with
the remarks of the boys. These last were much
in evidence, for *nolens volens* we must give them
a front seat; so they had been arranged in rows,
oil-seller's son, bunya boys, farmers and even a
bolder *Chamár*, all squatting close together in
the dusty roadway, as oblivious to the presence
of any one else as though the exhibition were all
their own; and perfectly happy, spite of an oc-
casional cut from the end of a bamboo, when
their comments on the pictures or their gibes at
one another grew too vociferous. Boys are boys
the world over, and we seldom get through an
evening's meeting without a stick or two being
forfeited, which were serving as means of tor-
ture to all within reach, or some specially mis-

chievous lad being led off ignominiously by the ear.

Though we have been conducting these lantern meetings for many years, we have seldom had a hitch. Sometimes the oil has been poor, but we provide for this by carrying a drum of the best kerosene with us. Several times the frame, though strong and heavy, has been broken in the long journeys over the rough jungle roads, but the branch of a tree or the corners of two projecting roof-tops are easily brought into requisition. On one occasion the slide carrier was left behind, but the light cane of one of the workers, split and bound by two transverse pieces and twine into a rude square, formed a sufficient substitute to carry us through the meeting. Touring, however, has become so much of an art, the magic-lantern apparatus all being in its own case, that there is little room for anything going astray. Moreover it is easily handled; the whole can be set up while the crowd is gathering and removed ere it is dispersed.

Difficulties arise from without also. One evening when we had set up our sheet in a narrow roadway, the only thoroughfare in the village, we were obliged to stop in the midst of our meeting, remove the sheet and lantern, and allow

a belated herd of cattle to go by. Sometimes where the caste feeling runs high, we have difficulty in the selection of a place of meeting, and generally have to compromise by going into the main bazaar one evening, and among the low-caste people another. Occasionally the attractions of a wedding feast are too strong to be counteracted by our pictures; then we have to divide the interest as well as the roadway with the shrieks of cracked trumpets and the bellowings of noisy tomtoms, without which no marriage could be orthodox in India. Seldom, however, have we had a serious interruption and never has it been my experience to have the lantern meeting broken up.

The night was still and cool, and I felt glad of my long ulster to wrap around me when I was not speaking; but it did not seem to affect the crowd, though their bare limbs and thinly clad shoulders, boasting, most of them, nothing more than a single cotton shirt, must have been stiff with cold. The interest was intense; a programme had been arranged and each speaker knew exactly when his turn would come. After a few scenes from their own and neighbouring villages, and some views of Canada, we had a hymn thrown on the sheet, and then began the

addresses; first the parables of "The rich fool" and "The rich man and Lazarus," so pungently applicable to life in India; then the story of "The tares," "The hid treasure," and "The lost sheep," closing with the old story that never grows old, and is the same in all languages and in every land, "The prodigal son." It would require a powerful cinematograph to depict the changing expression on the rude village faces as for the first time these divine masterpieces came across their spiritual vision, and the lessons ran athwart their experience. They stood many of them as if entranced, while picture after picture was flashed before their eyes, only an occasional "*shábásh*" (well done) or "*sach hai*" (it is true), betraying the feelings that were stirring within their hearts.

I have no apology to make for this method of evangelisation. Some may object, some scoff at such an instrumentality. I can only say that in no work of my life have I felt more uplifted, more satisfied that God's benediction was upon me than in these stirring evening meetings in the villages—the sustained interest, the freedom from interruption, the spell that seems to hold our hearers even after the service is over, the deep, heart-felt "Salaam!" with which they

bid us farewell, all speak of the Spirit's power.

At the close of our meeting we were in some difficulty as to how to get our apparatus back to camp. Usually we have our own bullock cart, but it had gone to Mhow during the afternoon for provisions, and the villagers were very loth to go out after dark. While we were pursuing our enquiries, and as usual, even in the little things, looking up higher for aid, a man came forward with smiling countenance, and asked if we did not remember him. He was a bullock driver who had one day got into trouble, many miles away on the streets of Mhow, and I had been able to help him. He gladly volunteered to go for his cart, and, spite of the trouble, the lateness and the dark, carried our things safely back to camp.

As we neared the grove where our tents were pitched we could hear solemn and persuasive tones as of one preaching, and we caught a glimpse of an interested group round the camp-fire. It was the cook, who, having dinner ready, had gathered about him the village *chow-kidárs*, and was relating to them his own experiences and the wonderful merits of the gospel; nor did his earnestness make our simple meal

one whit the less tasty. It was not an unfitting picture to close an evening with some of God's masterpieces; for "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."

CHAPTER VII

AGAINST GREAT ODDS

It is market day and the bazaar is crowded, for the countryside has taken a holiday and come to town. They come by couples, they come by families, they come by villages; to see and to be seen, to buy or to sell, to pay their rents to the Thakur or make some complaint against their neighbours. The little, box-like shops on either side of the market-place, with their low, tiled roofs and stone sills abutting out over the ill-smelling drain, are surrounded with eager purchasers; out in the roadway, in two long straggling lines, a little in front of the shops, the vegetable women have spread their baskets of onions and red peppers, greens and cucumbers; here and there a trinket-seller displays his wares on a faded cloth to catch the eye of the jewellery-loving Hindu and the dust; in the most favoured sites the cloth and brass merchants have erected their booths, from which they bargain good-naturedly with the crowd; in a quiet corner the shoemaker plies his despised but necessary trade,

while down a side street, away from offence to Brahmin susceptibilities, the Mohammedan butcher barter's goat's flesh to his co-religionists.

Crowds of women in red and blue *sáris*, with market baskets on their heads, stand gossiping and bargaining with the shopkeepers; clustered round a bunya's stall are the poor villagers who have walked ten miles to get an extra yard of cloth for their rupee; how touchingly human to see a man and his wife, meagrely clad both of them, fingering some coveted piece of goods, while they haggle with the bunya for a further reduction, if it be only a pice; standing in gossiping groups discussing crops and the probabilities for the rains, are the more substantial farmers and tradesmen, who boast perhaps an old pony to ride; there struts the dude with his pink coat and pale green turban; these supercilious individuals with broad Marathi turbans and clean well-fed faces, are the government officials; conspicuous also are the Mohammedan pedlar, the policeman, the soldier, the priest and the pundit; and last of all there are your better known friends the missionary and one or two of his native helpers, for we are present also on market days.

We come neither to see nor be seen, neither

to buy nor sell, unless it may be tracts. Ours is more than a passing interest; these multitudes are human souls, struggling with the great problem of human destiny, and we have come to give them the "bread of life." We choose a shady spot, beneath a tree or in the shelter of some proffered shop front, for even the Hindu likes to get out of this ever-broiling sun, and announce our presence by singing one of those beautiful Hindi lyrics which have translated the gospel story into the melody of the people, accompanying it, as the case may be, with concertina or baby organ. The crowd soon gathers, for the Hindus have one characteristic that may yet prove their salvation, they are very curious. The hymn over, one of us will begin to speak, probably explaining the meaning of the words we have sung, and showing through their interpretation, who we are, the great Master whom we serve, and His message which we have come to deliver.

In standing before an Indian audience, the missionary's first difficulty is with the language. It is not a mere matter of grammar, though the Hindu lives largely in the subjunctive mood; nor yet of vocabulary, though the villager thinks and talks in metaphors. For instance he does not

speak of "going for a walk," but of "eating the air," nor of "repentance" but of "catching his ear," and "haste" is expressed by such a phrase as "breaking bread in one place and taking drink in another." Even when words and phrases have been learned, their content to the European is often very different from the meaning they convey to the Hindu. Such terms as "God," "sin," "righteousness," "holiness," etc., have an entirely different significance to the missionary from his hearers, and in using them their new content must be made plain. Again such common Christian conceptions as "justification," "sanctification" and even "conscience" have no parallels in the Hindu mind.

Closely connected with the use of these terms is the difficulty of understanding the Hindu's view-point. His conception of God and man's relationship to Him, of sin and man's responsibility, and of human destiny are so different, that to speak without entering into these, and explaining his meaning, the preacher might often be talking to the wind.

Even with these difficulties conquered, it is not easy to hold a Hindu audience, for it is very fickle and curiosity soon tires. One must follow its vagaries, understand its temper, be quick to

discern lack of interest and none the less ready to check it. Christianity is to the Hindu a new idea, it is out of his ken, so to speak; it presents phases of thought that have never entered his mind before; it is no message of the gods he is accustomed to, it deals with neither food, clothing nor pice, why should he hear it? Nor can one be satisfied with mere attention; when preaching, I have seen a man stand with eyes glued on my face, seemingly drinking in the words with both eyes and ears, and at the most interesting part of the discourse, turn to his neighbour and remark "the padri sahib must be very young, he has no mustache." Christianity has a hard battle to fight for it meets with opposition at almost every point of contact, and is opposed to the very genius of the Hindu; it assails his religion, his daily life, his national customs and the teachings of his forefathers, its only redeeming feature being that it is kind and, unlike Mohammedanism, does nothing by force.

Behind all these difficulties is the ever-present foe of indifference. Non-Christians are far from the eager, truth-devouring beings of childhood's memories; most of them are perfectly indifferent to the Word of Life we bring them, or interested only in so far as it satisfies their curiosity or af-

fords them entertainment for an idle hour. There is a saying among the villagers :

*" Sānche koi na māne ; jhūthe jag patiyae ;
Gali gali goras phire, madirā baith bikae."*

(Man heeds not truth, but lists to lies ;
Alas ! such is man's will.
He tramps the streets who milk supplies ;
While liquor men sit still.)

Some spicy or questionable tale, some piece of idle gossip or lewd song is more to their taste. Time and again, as we stand in the market-place proclaiming Christ's free salvation for all, only the few gather to the gospel sound, while all around us men are chattering about money, clothes, fields or their neighbours,—this is the most subtle and depressing of all our opponents.

Even less trying than indifference is open opposition ; sometimes we rather welcome it, for if from an honest heart it sets people thinking. It is of various kinds and seldom physical. One evening on the streets of the city we were attacked with stones by a Mohammedan mob who had been worsted in an argument ; and occasionally, if we prolong our talks till after dark, we will be pelted with sand and mud, but this is generally the sport of boys. More frequently the wags of a village interrupt the preaching to show

off or raise a laugh. They do nothing serious, only ask ridiculous questions or poke fun at the speakers. In such cases one must never become disconcerted or lose his temper; if you understand your audience and are quick-witted, you will soon turn the laugh or overawe the disturber. More than once have I seen some worthless braggart, who was making sport of holy things, completely subdued by a solemn rebuke or an appeal to the reverent feelings of the crowd. Of course we give even the most worthless opponent a chance; we will answer questions either at the close of the address or at the tents, and we always have a standing invitation to meet any one, either at his own or our place of appointment to discuss religious differences. But if, as frequently happens, it be some flippant youth desiring to be wise or funny before the crowd, the surest way of stopping his annoyance is to turn on him his own laugh. To a Western audience the arguments that find favour in an Indian bazaar, and no less the devices used to silence or reply, would appear childish. The average Oriental with all his subtlety is no reasoner, real argument he is either unable or unwilling to understand, and real discussion with a man who was insincere would mean dissipating

your audience and losing an opportunity. But when he does not heed your polite request to wait till the address is over, when he will not be quieted but persists in his interruption, his question must be answered though it requires more of wit than brains to do it.

On one occasion, in the middle of a gospel talk, a man had persisted in the unprofitable but not uncommon question, "Where did sin come from?" At last, turning on him, I said, "What's that?" "Where did sin come from, what is the origin of sin?" he repeated, looking round the audience with a self-satisfied leer, as if to say "Now I've given the Padri Sahib a poser." I did not attempt to answer; I knew the objection to be a stock question, and that he had his reply ready whatever I might have answered; but, turning to the crowd, I said: "A certain man's house was on fire. Apparently unconscious of his danger, the householder was lying asleep inside. At no little risk to their lives his friends rushed in to drag him out, calling on him to save himself. What was their surprise to hear him reply, 'I have no desire to be saved, I will not leave my bed till I find out the origin of the fire.' What think you of such a man?" "Why he's a fool," answered several people at once. "Well

then," I replied, pointing to the interrupter, "what do you think of this man? We are in a world of sin, men all round us are dying of sin. But when I come to warn you and tell you of a way of escape, this man, instead of heeding the message or permitting others to heed, says he wants to know nothing of the escape from sin till he has first found out its origin." But the interrupter did not wait for their opinion, and I had the undivided attention of my audience while I continued to tell them of "the escape from sin."

On another occasion a priest was defending idolatry by the usual pantheistic contention that all things were divine, therefore the image. I could not but feel that, with his intelligence, there was more of mercenary motive than faith in his profession, as I glanced over at the almost shapeless mass under the neighbouring archway, smeared with red paint and grease, and surrounded with broken cocoanut shells and the scraps left by the village dogs. Picking up a stone from the roadside, I asked him:

"Is this divine?"

"Yes," he replied, hesitatingly, not quite seeing whither I was leading him.

"And the rupee," (which I had requested him

to produce from a fold in his turban) "is that also divine?"

"Oh, yes," he answered, not quite so reluctantly.

"Which," said I, "contains the more divinity, the stone or the silver rupee?"

"Oh, the stone, it is the larger."

"Well, then," I replied, "let us trade."

But he did not.

The rougher element among the Mohammedans is even more difficult to control and more unscrupulous and vulgar in its style of objection than among the Hindus. Where it is mere rowdyism, throwing mud or baiting the speakers with offensive remarks, one must just be patient; and if forbearing, can generally count on the sympathies of the crowd. In other cases one must depend on diplomacy. One evening our men were preaching in the bazaar of a town near the Nerbudda. One after another, the speakers had been interrupted by the irrelevant questions and unsavory remarks of a loud voiced Mohammedan on the outskirts of the crowd. Every request to desist, even the attempts of those in the audience near him, proved of no avail to quiet his disturbance. In the middle of an address by an old catechist, one of those animals so com-

monly found wandering about an Indian bazaar, with small body, big head and prodigiously large ears, poked his nose into the outer circle and sang out a vigorous "Hee! Haw!" The speaker stopped, and, pausing a moment, cast his eye round the crowd and enquired, "Where's that talking machine? We won't keep him any longer, as his brother's come to call for him."

As it is our custom never to engage in discussion in the bazaar, where it would only engender unseemly strife, we frequently have to stand by our offer and meet men, either at our tents or at some appointed building. We have had many such encounters with fanatical moulvies, subtle Brahmin priests and ash-clad fakirs. I was called to the schoolhouse one evening by a sudden message that a moulvie and a crowd of followers had come to discuss religion with me. On hurrying down, I found a rather motley crowd gathered, representing all classes of Mohammedan society, cooks, shopkeepers, teachers and government officials. The moulvie was a rather effeminate looking man, dressed in a long, somewhat dirty white *kúrta* (tunic) and *paijâmas*. He was a stranger to Mhow, evidently a Pathan, as was betrayed by both features and dialect, but especially by his shaggy, fair-skinned attendants.

He had come to Mhow to stir up his co-religionists; it is said he came among them like a veritable John the Baptist, awakening them from their easy-going religious indifference, searching out every breach of Mohammedan law, and visiting it with all possible punishment. His zeal finally overstepped the patience of the authorities and he was obliged to leave the cantonment.

On his entering the schoolroom, all conversation ceased and every man rose to his feet. Without waiting for arrangements, but like one in authority, he immediately took the meeting into his own hand and poured out a volley of objections to some of the doctrines of Christianity, more particularly the divinity of Christ. He asked question after question without waiting for reply. Like one of those mountain torrents on his native hillsides, he dashed impetuously on and there was no stopping him. He talked not so much to me as to his own, his voice rising in pitch and increasing in intensity as the speech flowed on. Nor was it without considerable effect even on these half-tamed Mohammedans of the plains; every eye was fixed, every nerve seemed tense and strung. What a terrible thing must such fanaticism be among the wild hill tribes of the frontier and on the lips of a "Mad

Mullah"! When he stopped for breath, I was able to interject a proposal that he should submit his questions one at a time. The resulting debate, however, was not quite as picturesque as the moulvie's address. His evident intention was not so much to get at the truth as to make an impression on his followers; to him, as to most Mohammedans, discussion was a sort of passion; he argued for argument's sake and his great aim was to gain his point. His methods may be judged from the fact that during the debate he had no difficulty even in denying the Quran for the sake of argument. The only advantage from the discussion was that when all the questions had been asked, I was given an opportunity to speak at length and present the claims of the gospel, and to an audience that I had seldom before had the privilege of reaching.

The moulvie and I met on several occasions, one of them being an address I gave, at his own request, on the claims of Christ. I found them not unsusceptible, especially to the arguments from their own Quran, as, gathering out its broken fragments of the divine message, I pieced them together round Jesus.

I have said nothing about the opposition of the priesthood, the unfriendliness of the native

governments and other forces which go to swell the ranks opposed to the advance of the gospel; these will be manifest from incidents related elsewhere. But behind these unveiled opponents there lie more deeply rooted still the blighting curse of idolatry, the terrible despotism of caste and custom and the subtle anæsthetic of a pantheistic philosophy. The Hindu is clothed in an armour in which no link seems incomplete; socially, intellectually and religiously, he has an answer ready at every point of attack. And yet his heart is not impenetrable; glossed over with superstition, bound down by conservatism, perverted by the false teaching of ages, and stupefied by an equally false philosophy, great aspirations and great possibilities lie sleeping there. We do not feel these in the big bazaar; but in the little talks by the roadside, in front of the village temple, or sitting cross-legged in the shade of some friendly verandah, we see the veil lifted from the rude villager's heart, and hold converse with his inner soul. The fight is severe and the odds against us great, but looming up through the awakening life in these village hearts we see the broken ramparts of the superstitions of the past, and over all floating the banner of our Lord Jesus Christ.

VIII

BARWAI: AN OUTSTATION

“WHO was the father of Jesus?”

The speaker, needless to say, was a Moham-medan; for this is one of their stock questions, and a common interruption to the telling of the Gospel story. He formed one of a group of villagers gathered beneath a rude cattle-shed, some seated on the rough-hewn logs, stored there out of the sun and rain by a neighbouring bunya, some standing and some squatted on the scattered straw. We had been driven into this shelter from our stand beneath the *imli*-tree across the way, by the pouring rain; and old Raghu, who was preaching, had been telling the story of that other cattle-shed in far off Bethlehem, when the stone-mason interrupted him.

“Brother,” I interposed, “what was the Prophet’s purpose in establishing his religion, was it not to put down idolatry?”

“True, oh Padri Sahib,” answered the man, squaring himself for an argument, “that was the purpose of the Prophet, blessed be his name!”

“How long hast thou been in this village?”

“About ten years.”

“Hast thou ever preached against idolatry or tried to lead the people from their sin?”

“No, Padri Sahib,” he replied, hesitatingly, as if puzzled to see the drift of the argument.

“Well,” I said, “thou hast done nothing to put down idolatry thyself and immediately we Christians come to turn the people from their sins, instead of helping thou dost oppose us. Is that right, oh brother?”

The stone-mason was honest enough to confess himself in the wrong; and when, a few moments later, we closed our meeting and began to sell tracts, he was the first purchaser.

It was a day in the beginning of the rains of '92, the roads were heavy with mud and the air in the bazaar reeking with the fetid smells of rotting rubbish. Raghu and I had come down to Barwai, a town in the Nerbudda valley about thirty-six miles from Mhow, prospecting with a view to establishing an outstation. I had long been impressed, in fact since our first district tour, with the need of some new method to follow up the preaching and deal with enquirers. In our discursive journeys we could preach the gospel, but we could not deepen impressions and

bring men to open confession. Better work could be done if Christian teachers were settled in the various centres, where the spirit's influence had been most manifest, with opportunity of meeting people from the different villages every two or three weeks, instead of once a year, and of dealing more personally with enquirers. Such places would become centres of Christian life and influence, affording all within their reach an object lesson in Christian character and service, an opportunity of regular meetings and especially of hearing the gospel at their own doors from week to week.

Raghu and I spent the day amidst the smells of the bazaar, holding meetings and interviewing some of the townspeople about our proposal. Barwai was a most suitable place for an out-station, being the chief town of a district, a large market-place, the seat of an *Ámin* and his court, and within easy reach of some seventy or eighty villages.

As a result of our visit two of the Native preachers came down a few days later to remain a week or two and open the work. On arriving, they rented a small house on the bazaar road, at a quiet corner of the village and far removed from the temples. But no sooner had they

begun to preach on the streets than a hue and cry was raised by the Brahmins, and the landlord persuaded to drive them out; nor were they able to procure another lodging. Nothing was left them therefore, but to seek shelter in the *sarai* or native rest-house, an open tile-roofed shed, and in this case not very clean, the resort of every kind of traveller, including beggar and fakir. It was discouraging, for, apart from the discomfort, it gave them no place to store their effects, and no suitable accommodation for cooking their food; but our men, thankful for even this poor shelter, set themselves with true Christian fortitude to make the best of it. By paying a lad a few pice daily they were able to have their effects guarded while they went about their work and at night they cooked their food on the roadside with the crowd. Every evening they held a service among the travellers at the rest-house. At the first meeting they were attracted by a young Brahmin, whose attention to the preaching proclaimed him as specially interested; and when at bedtime, during the singing of their evening hymn, he drew near to listen, they called him over and spoke to him. He was a Maratha youth of about twenty years of age, assistant to a merchant, whom he was accompany-

ing on a journey to Maheshwar. It appeared that he had long been a seeker, but had as yet heard little concerning Christ or His message.

He became almost at once an enquirer and when, at the end of the week, I visited Barwai I was surprised to see his earnestness and simplicity. Satisfied that the root of the matter was in him I commended him to the Christians for further instruction, as long as he should remain with them at the rest-house. Meanwhile our men busied themselves visiting the *mahallas*, or districts of the town, and surrounding villages, and becoming acquainted with their field. They also took every opportunity to pursue enquiries for a house in which to live, but till almost the last moment with no result. At the end of another week they returned to Mhow to report on their field and make full arrangements for permanent occupancy, for at last they had got word of accommodation. What was my surprise to see accompanying them the young Brahmin enquirer. It appeared that when his master was leaving Barwai to go into the interior, the servant wanted to give up his position and remain with the Christians. As soon, however, as the bunya knew the reason for his request he became very angry, and though he had no legal claim on him,

absolutely refused to let him off. One day in the midst of pouring rain they started, the young man bidding our Christians "good-bye" with a heavy heart.

"But I didn't seem to be going the right road," he told me in relating the story; "every step of the way my feet kept dragging me backwards, and the road grew heavier and heavier. At last when we had gone about fourteen miles, I could stand it no longer; I left everything I had in the cart, and, turning round, fled as fast as my feet could carry me back to Barwai."

He had had nothing to eat all day, the master's anger venting itself in a process of starvation; the roads were heavy and muddy with rain; it was late at night and all his possessions were behind him; and yet, nothing daunted, he fled back to the story of two passing strangers. "Yes, I was afraid," he replied, in answer to a question, "but though I was very thirsty, I was still more afraid to stop at a village for a drink, for fear they would detain me."

About midnight our men were awakened in the *sarai* by some one calling them, and awoke to find the poor Brahmin wet, hungry and now shivering, after his long journey. As he had left everything behind and was so miserable, our

men wished immediately to give him something to eat. They did not ask him to take their food, as that would have required his breaking caste, but offered him pice to go to the bazaar and buy for himself. The young man, however, hesitated; he had already taken a long step towards Christianity, and he began to say to himself, with a true Hindu conception of the immediate result of a change of faith, "If I am going to become a Christian I must eat with Christians." It was a hard struggle, for he was a Brahmin; the prejudices of countless generations were against it, and every fibre of his nature must have revolted at the thought of taking food from strange hands; but while he waited silent prayers were ascending beside him for help.

"I will eat *your* food," he finally said; and there and then he abandoned caste and Hinduism.

Perhaps the first step was the hardest. The young man became an earnest student of the Word, for he could read, and was soon after baptised. His testimony before baptism was very interesting. I had shown him the dangers he would encounter in becoming a Christian, the loss of caste, friends and associations, and the subsequent hardships he would have to en-

· dure, and not least in the matter of earning his bread as a Christian.

“Padri Sahib,” he replied, “the grain must first be pounded in the mortar before it is fit to be made into bread; I am willing to suffer if it is to make me a better Christian.” On the day of baptism, removing his Brahmin thread before the assembled congregation, he gave it to me, for he was done with it forever.

Thus was begun our work in Barwai. After many enquiries and disappointments, our men had got track of a house belonging to a merchant friend in Mhow; a bargain was struck, and before another week was past, the two men were settled in their new home and our first outstation opened. We had many experiences; the *Boráhs* or Mohammedan merchants asked for a school, even sending me a numerously signed petition, and then backed out of it on account of the Bible teaching. Then the poor people, who were not permitted to attend the native government school in the bazaar, preferred a similar request, but were frightened out of it by the Brahmins.

Meanwhile our men gave most of their time to preaching in the bazaars and surrounding villages, where, with but few exceptions, their gospel

message was well received. Among the exceptions, however, was a small village a mile or so from Barwai, in which, though Raghu had received a fair hearing the first time he went, the Brahmin priest had so influenced the villagers, that soon none of them seemed willing to listen. But Raghu was not so easily beaten; taking his *sitāra* he played and sang the *bhajans* (hymns) from door to door. One day he was accosted by a *dholi* or drum player, whose sympathetic attention he had several times particularly contrasted with the indifference of the rest of the village. "Salaam! Father," said the stranger, "I have several times wished to speak to thee." And sitting down on a stone by the roadside, the preacher heard his story:—It turned out that some months before, when returning from a journey to the North, he had purchased a tract from one of the colporteurs on the station platform at Neemuch, whose contents he had studied carefully; and ever since he had been eager to hear more about the religion of Jesus. He had several times wished to speak to Raghu, but feared the priest; however the catechist's perseverance had conquered. The first meeting led to many others; and the drum-player became a constant visitor at the mission in Barwai. As he

was educated, he spent much of his time in reading Christian books; and it was one of these, "The Enquiry Into the True Religion," a comparison of Christianity with the religions of India, that seemed finally to clinch his doubts and hopes and determine him to come out for Christ.

I usually visited Barwai and the other outstations once a month to hold service and Bible-class with the Christians and enquirers. Here for the first time I met the *dholi*. He was a man of middle age, tall, thin, and dressed in the ordinary costume of the well-to-do villager, cotton shirt, loin-cloth and red turban. He was not a communicative man, but the set features of his spare face, which were surrounded with a thin, scraggy beard, showed both thought and determination; and though not very eager to question, he listened attentively to every explanation of the Christ Way. I did not urge him to be baptised; I knew that some day, without any demonstration, and in the privacy of his own heart, he would come to a decision. I was not surprised, therefore, when a week or two later he made a journey to Mhow and asked for baptism. It was hard to refuse, and he seemed deeply grieved when I asked him to wait a little

while; but again without any demonstration, he went back to his village and to work. It is one of the most difficult questions the missionary is called on to determine, that of readiness for baptism; the seal of the kingdom and sonship, especially in these new lands, must be kept unsullied; and yet too much care cannot be exercised lest he should offend "one of these little ones." In a few weeks the *dholi* was back again with the same request; so, after further conversation and prayer, and on the unanimous advice of the native brethren, it was decided he should be baptised. He had again to wait, however, as I was too ill for the service; but these trials gave me more confidence in his position, as I knew that besides his expenses he was at considerable loss by neglecting his work. It was a solemn service and a landmark in the history of the work in Barwai, when we received him into the Church of Christ.

Few of us perhaps realise all that it means to the conservative prejudices of a Hindu home when one of its members, and especially the father and head of the house, cuts his religious moorings, and, like a ship putting out into an unknown sea, breaks away from caste and the associations of Hinduism for the society of a

strange people. To the Hindu every relationship in life is religious, and a change therefore of his religious connections is not a mere break in the even tenor of the past; it is a revolution, a catastrophe, a sudden destruction of all the sacred and social bonds that make up life, both here and hereafter. On the women especially, to whom in their social seclusion and religious ignorance the importance of these bonds is intensely magnified, the blow falls with a severity often more terrible than death. Many a Hindu mother has dashed her head against the stones on the news of the perversion of her son from the ancient faith. Truly to many the gospel brings not peace but a sword.

It will be understood also how readily this sense of disappointment is changed into a narrow spirit of revenge. The poor *dholi* was not only shunned by the villagers but abhorred and despised by his wife. She revolted from his change of faith as something recklessly sinful. He might believe what he would, but to break caste and connect himself with an alien religion was not only wrong, it was imbecile. She refused to cook for him or allow him to eat in the same part of the house as the family, she lashed him bitterly with her reproaches, and did every-

thing to make his life miserable. He not only bore all bravely, but openly testified to his faith in Christ, and, as he went about from village to village in pursuit of his calling, quietly taught the Gospel story. He was a man of considerable influence among his caste people, and gradually they have all become permeated with the Christ message, many have become definitely interested, and several have been led to confess Christ in baptism, from among whom has come one of the brightest of our young preachers. Thus the very unity and corporate spirit which are the strength of the caste system, cooperate at times in the furtherance of the gospel. Though neither the character nor the history of Christianity leads us to expect cataclysmic or sectional additions to its ranks, yet when the first converts are caste leaders, as happened with these *dholis*, the gospel is given a mighty lever for its propagation.

For some time, while we had a medical missionary in Mhow, a dispensary was opened in Barwai under the charge of an English lady-missionary, who did much valuable service especially among the women and children. Spite of this combination of Christianising forces however, many of the Brahmin officials remained unfriendly. There was great rejoicing when the

house in which our Christian helpers were living was burned down. "This," said they, "will drive the Christians out, for they will not be able to get another house." Quietly I entered into negotiations for the purchase of a piece of land and the building of a house. No objection was made at the time to my purchase, which, according to the custom of the state, I registered in the *Ámin's* court, receiving a stamped receipt for the deed, and in a few days the foundations were begun. At the end of the month required for registration, however, I was told that the Holkar authorities had refused to sanction the sale ; and though I had many interviews with the Prime Minister I could get no other reply than that the Maharaja had determined not to allow Europeans to obtain land within his state. My rights as a British subject, the payment of the money in the presence of an official, and the registration of the deed in the *Ámin's* court would, I was led to believe, have procured a settlement in the Mission's favour by an appeal to the British authorities. This we have persistently refused to do ; while I have ever found the British authorities in India most sympathetic towards our work, an appeal to them is of the nature of secular force ; and the cause of Christ and His gospel of peace

is not to be furthered by such a means. We have been waiting five years for that piece of land and we can afford to wait ; in God's time we will get it.

With such sentiments on the part of those in authority, it was not likely the Christians in the district would escape persecution. One young man was imprisoned in Barwai on some trumped-up charge; and, because he confessed himself a Christian, was most cruelly ill-used by the native police. They tied him with cords in such a way as to make every movement one of pain, and then compelled him to try and walk for their sport. The officials refused even to see one of our missionaries, when he called to ask the nature of the charge and the reason of the cruel treatment. Again I appealed to the Prime Minister of the Maharaja, asking simply that justice be done and the man granted a fair trial. This time I was not only most cordially received, though the Minister was so ill he was compelled to receive me lying in bed, but the matter was set right, and later a more friendly official placed in charge of the district.

No violent and coercive persecution of the Christians, such as has been witnessed lately in China, would be possible in India; but the con-

tinued petty and social persecution and the often legalised invasion of their rights are systematically pursued. The former is to be seen in the outcasting of the convert, his rejection by family and friends, the loss of trade and custom and the general disabilities in procuring a maintenance. The latter is more manifest in Native states ; in British India the property rights of the convert are protected by statute, but all attempts hitherto to obtain such protection in Native states have proved unavailing. In the Mysore State, for instance, "a Hindu became a Christian, and after baptism his wife deserted him, taking with her his children. He sued for recovery of the children, but was adjudged to have lost his right of guardianship." Similarly in Travancore State, when two converts sought to maintain their right of maintenance out of the family property, it was held by a majority of the judges on the full bench that they had no right whatever to retain even the property given them for maintenance when they were Hindus. Petitions have been made by the missionaries to the rulers of both Travancore and Mysore to have legislation provided for the continuance to a convert of his rights, but without result, and, strange to say, seemingly without even the sympathy of the

British Government. The fact that for fifty years such legislation as is asked for has been in force in British India and has proved beneficial, is sufficient answer to the objection that it will interfere seriously with the social fabric of Hinduism.

Spite of these and kindred disabilities, the work in our outstations and among the villages has gone steadily on, as far as the limitations of our staff would permit. Though they add to the difficulties of work in native states and retard especially open confession, such hindrances are not without their value as sifting agencies. Again we are persuaded that the cause of Christ is not to be furthered by an appeal to the secular arm. These rights will yet be established; signs are not wanting that the native conscience is being awakened to the present injustice, and that legislation will be freely offered by the Native States themselves to remove the disabilities under which the convert suffers.

Our plan of work in the development of the outstations has been: daily preaching of the Gospel in the surrounding villages in the morning, and in the *mahallas* and bazaars of the town in the evening. Regular services, including a Sunday-school, have been conducted every Sunday, and during our monthly visits we usually

hold magic-lantern meetings in the evenings. The aim which has dominated the whole development of this work has been to bring the gospel not only within reach of every individual, but in such an intelligent and persistent way that he may be able to accept it. Perhaps the most memorable meetings of all, in these outstations, have been when in the big gospel tent, or within the mission house, shut in from the curious crowd, the little group of Christians have gathered reverently round the Lord's Table and partaken together of the bread and wine in remembrance of Him. There were no seats, the table was a piece of camp furnishing, the communion service from the same, but God was there; and that blessed spirit of fellowship with these firstlings of the great Indian church in that event, before which both East and West stand with the same wondering love and awe, has numbered them among the marked experiences of a missionary career. Such services have been epoch making, they seemed to speak to us of a glorious future, when from a thousand churches in this valley of Nimar the solemn communion hymn would rise to the praise of Him whose death had won this victory.

The work in Barwai has received a temporary

check and the station been closed for a season, chiefly because of the smallness of our staff. But we look forward to the day when not only the foundations, which now lie waiting at the edge of the village for the Maharaja's sanction, will bear their destined buildings, but upon the broader and more spiritual foundations laid in the hearts of many of the surrounding villagers, will arise a noble temple to the eternal praise of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

IX

HOW WE DUG THE WELL

HEAT! relentless, pitiless heat! Down the great hillsides, that fronted the village, the mighty heat waves rolled, gathering intensity on the way, till they swept in one fierce flood into the valley beneath, shrivelling the leaves, licking up the last sap from the grass roots, baking the earth till its crust warped, and drying up tanks and ponds. There was no escape from it; shade was not shelter, the very atmosphere was on fire. It was as though the heavens had melted and flooded the earth; one could feel its waves lapping against face and neck as it flowed up over the narrow verandah and in at the low door till the little native house was full, and we sat gasping for a cool breath. Added to this the fierce sun rays pierced the low roof, till even beneath the sun helmet and well-soaked cloths we could feel the slow creeping tension of the nerves that gathered to the intensity of bursting.

We had come down the night before to this little town beneath the mountains, prospecting

for a new outstation. After the land trouble at Barwai, we felt that it would be unwise to rely wholly on the uncertainty of its occupancy, as the only basis of operation in the eastern part of the valley; and as another and just as important a group of villages could better be reached from a point farther west, we set about to look for a new outstation in a centre where, if possible, the land difficulty would not be so prominent. Here and there throughout the Native States of Central India, the Imperial authorities have retained control over small sections of territory to serve as places of residence for their own officials. In one of these, Manpur, above the mountains, we had already procured land and established our second outstation; and it was in another, Bagode, where the central government had at least temporary control, we were at present prospecting with a view to a third centre.

It was the middle of the hot weather, so we had travelled down the night before, breaking our journey at a wayside village, where we tried to snatch a few hours' sleep, stretched out on the tonga cushions, with our feet dangling over the dashboard. The *Patel* of the village would have pressed upon us the use of his cot, but sad experience has taught us that the ordinary native

bed had already too many occupants to give an European sleeping room. It was an awful journey; the road had once been macadamised, but for many years had not been mended, so that with broken bridges and boulder-strewn roadbed, it was now far worse than the unbroken fields; then the heat, even at night, was intense, and the fine dust pungent and penetrating.

We found the *Kāmasdār* of the district, an aged Brahmin, at Parlia. He had given us a cordial welcome, arranged for our entertainment in a native house, and accompanied us during the earlier part of the day on a tour of inspection about the town and neighbouring villages. Parlia is the centre of a large group of villages below the mountains. To the right rises old Tumbai, and away to the left Jam, scarred on one side by the famous but now ruined roadway, that was once the main artery of traffic between Malwa and Nimar. Right above is the famous giant gateway, through which the road debouches on to the plains above. To the south is Kasbi, a town of no little importance in Holkar territory, and beyond Maheshwar and the Nerbudda. As our horses were used up we were forced to make our tour on foot, so it had been a

hard morning's work; and as we were tired with the previous night's journey it was little wonder we felt the blinding, dessicating heat, and rejoiced when the cooler shades of evening came on, and we were permitted to get away from this furnace into the more tempered atmosphere of the plains above.

As a result of our visit, Raghu and his family moved down, as soon as the weather moderated, to begin work in Parlia and the surrounding district. But we met with the same difficulty here as in Barwai; the Mohammedan, who rented us his house, was soon forced by the Brahmins and bunyas to order the Christians out; and again they had no choice of quarters but the rest-house, fortunately in this case a cleaner and quieter place, in which our Christian people made their home for several months. The next difficulty was with their food; the merchants refused to sell them grain, and they were obliged to procure it from a distant market-place. Then the wells were shut on them and they were driven to the neighbouring river for their water. Even the relief of the rest-house was only temporary. The following December, when I was camping in a village some fifteen miles away, Raghu came over one day in a state of great excitement, to

tell me the villagers had held a meeting and decided the Christians should not remain. I immediately went over to see the *Kámasdár*, who of course had no part in the decision of the Brahmins, and who, I had reason to believe, was not ill disposed. He pointed out to me the difficulties in the way of the Christians procuring accommodation, and how he had been glad to permit them to use the rest-house for so long; so after talking matters over, I told him that, as the gospel had come to the valley to stay, and we could not allow ourselves to be driven away by a clique, we would buy land and build a house for ourselves. It was Saturday and I had only a short time to spare before it would be necessary for me to start for Mhow, to take the Sunday services for the troops. To have left the purchase till Monday would have given the Brahmins opportunity to frame some excuse for preventing it. Within two hours we had chosen a suitable site, the deeds were drawn up, and the land ours.

The hot weather was well on, however, before our little buildings were completed, and for weeks Mr. Drew had to stand out in that torrid sun bath to superintend the rude villagers at their work, rearing the brick and mud walls,

shaping the rough doors and binding on the tiled roof. The house had hardly been completed when a new difficulty arose. One day Raghu came up to Mhow with that same woebegone expression and look of final disappointment that he had worn when the Brahmins decided to drive him out. He used to call me his *mā-bāp* (mother and father) though he was more than old enough to be my father, but I fear he had little hope of my solving this new difficulty.

“*Ham kyā karen, Sāhib?*” (What can we do?) and tears of discouragement filled the old man’s eyes, “the river is dried up and the Brahmins refuse us the use of the village wells.” It appeared that the excuse had been given that the Christians’ vessels would destroy the villagers’ caste. “But, Sahib Ji,” said Raghu, “this is not the true reason. Many a time have I drunk water at the village wells, and never been refused till they learned I was a Christian. Why, to-day, Sahib, they wouldn’t give me a drink the whole way in from Parlia; I wasn’t able even to wet my lips.”

And I thought of the terrible road beneath the mountains, of walking in the pungent dust over those rough stones; I thought of the blinding, smothering heat of that midsummer day, when

we broiled in the liquid atmosphere of that village beneath the baked hillsides. Of all the agonies the human system is called on to endure, perhaps none is so terrible as that of thirst: the scorching heat, the dry, baked skin, the parched mouth, drawn till it fails to speak, the cracked lips, the glaring, haunted eyes; well may you who have never known the agonies of thirst, have pity for the dwellers on India's plains when the skies are brass and the breasts of mother earth are dry.

I knew Raghu's contention to be correct, and that the closing of the wells was only one of the special persecutions by which the villagers visited their spite on those who became Christians. We had already experienced similar trouble in another village, the Christians being refused permission to draw water, even from the wells they had used before conversion; yes and even from those used by the Mohammedans, who have no caste. But in that case the British officials intervened of their own accord. I could have appealed to the officials in the case of Parlia also, but the feeling had run so high that I determined, if possible, to avoid their interference. We laid the matter before God, and it was decided to try for water on our own little

piece of ground, as, if we could have a well of our own, the question of water would be forever settled; and the Christians undertook to get the work done for the limited means at our disposal, by contributing as much as possible of the labour themselves.

The excavation of a well in this land of continual sunshine and terrible thirst is not only a work of considerable expense, as being more of the nature of a cistern it must be both wide and deep, but also a source of great virtue, and is usually initiated with much ceremony. It created no little talk, therefore, among the villagers, when it became known what the Christians were intending to do. It would be wrong to say that they were at heart opposed to our undertaking, for the natives of India look upon the man who digs a well as a public benefactor, whatever his religious persuasion; but they were certainly very skeptical of the result.

The piece of land we had purchased was a bare, narrow strip, not more than thirty yards wide, at one side of the village; and the Christians' houses, together with a room for the accommodation of the missionary, had been built towards the rear end, being the highest part of the compound. Beyond these again were the

houses of the *Chamárs* and low-caste people. The natural place for the well, therefore, in the opinion of the villagers, both because of its depth and its distance from offensive neighbours, would have been in the low ground at the front of the lot. But after prayer for guidance and deliberation among the Christians, it was decided to dig the well in the higher end of the compound behind the houses.

Without any ceremony beyond this simple prayer, the tools were bought and the work begun. No sooner, however, were the first few clods removed, than almost the whole village flocked over the thorn hedge into the compound to see and criticise. The village people are very voluble, and there was no lack of spokesmen.

“*Yahán par kyá hotá hai ?*” (What is going on here ?), several began to ask, as they crowded round the workers.

“*Kuán bantá hai*” (We are digging a well), the Christians replied, without ceasing their work.

But such a well digging had never been heard of in the village before. The idea of attempting to dig a well without the usual ceremonies, seemed to them not only preposterous but sacrilegious. There was much talk and a good deal

of gesticulation among the crowd for a few minutes, and then the criticisms began:

“But ye have not consulted the pundits,” objected one old wiseacre with toothless jaws; “Nor called in the priests,” added a hanger-on at the temple. “Ye have made no offerings to the gods,” sneered a young man, a clerk in the *kachahri*, in convincing tones; “Nor feasted the Brahmins,” objected another. And so the stream of criticisms, taunts and jeers rolled on, ending in the final assurance, which was evidently the judgment of the crowd, “*Kuchh páni nahín milegá, bikúll kuchh nahín milegá.*” (You will get no water, absolutely none.)

“But we have prayed to God who made the water,” answered the Christians, “and He will give it to us.”

“Wáh!” they replied, in a tone which meant a good deal more than it said. And as if to convince them that any God the Christians might believe in did not know much, one of the Brahmins, who had been prominent in the opposition, added “*Yahán par páni nahín hai*” (There is no water here), “*Wahán to páni ka jagah hai*” (There is the place for water), pointing to the lower end of the compound.

“But we have asked God about the place, and

we believe this is where He wants us to dig. *Aur páni zarúr milegá,*" (We will surely get water), answered the Christians with much earnestness.

At which, with a loud chorus of "Wáh! Wáh!" and much shrugging of the shoulders, the crowd turned disgusted away.

There was no real obstruction placed in the way of the work, for even the Brahmins had too much reverence for the digging of a well to attempt that. But day after day, as the excavation went on, the people would come to the side of the well, and, looking down at the busy toilers, pour out, with smirking assurance, the same questions and the same expressions of contempt. On the second or third day, when the broad hole, some twelve or fourteen feet in diameter, was beginning to get well through the upper soil, a shrewd looking farmer, who, with a companion was watching operations, remarked in no very complimentary terms, "*Nádán log! yah to phat-tar ka jagah hai, is men páni nahín hai.*" (The fools! this is a stony place, there is no water here.)

And sure enough, as if to further try their faith, our people soon struck rock, much to the gratification of the evil prophets. But it turned out to be soft rock, readily excavated with pick and

shovel, and, contrary to the usual nature of morum soil, remained soft most of the way down. On this being pointed out, the villagers had only the same assurance "*Yah to hogá, lekin páni nahín milegá.*" (That may be so, but still you will get no water.) And it looked as though the villagers were right, as day after day our men wrought away at the stone, and still no moisture appeared. "*Wáh! aur kyá?*" (What did you expect?) they asked, "*Kristán log hai*" (They are Christians); and they used a word which has been invented by the Hindus to express their unfeigned contempt for the foreign religion.

But the men toiled on in faith, praying every day that God would give them not only the water they so urgently needed, but grace to bear with the taunts of the villagers. For these simple Christians believed not only that God was with them, but that He had chosen the very site on which they were digging, and that therefore they were bound to succeed. Though the gibes of the villagers were hard to bear, they could not control the water. And gradually the people grew tired of gibes which had no effect, and our Christians were left to their digging in peace.

But it was slow work; the soil, though it might have been worse, was still rock; the pick

points had to be remade daily; and now that they were too deep for the coolies to travel up the winding pathway with the refuse on their heads, it had to be hoisted up toilsomely a basketful at a time, by means of the well rope. It was hot weather and of course there was no superficial moisture to deceive them, and they had been digging now for several weeks without any signs of water from beneath. Every day they were getting nearer and nearer to the great trap bed which underlies the whole soil of Malwa and Nimar; this reached without finding water, their hopes would be at an end.

As the hole grew deeper and deeper, the prayers grew more earnest and frequent. It was now not merely a question of getting water, to them the very God of the Christians was assailed and His faithfulness at stake. The men never seemed to tire; the rest hour was shortened, even the time for meals was grudged from the well. The great heat, the unusual labour, the unfriendliness of the villagers all were forgotten in the excitement of expectancy. Even the women gave a hand and helped with the baskets. Deeper, still deeper, yet how slowly the hole crept downwards; they were stripped to the waist, and the sweat was rolling down their

sides; the rock was growing harder and the great blocks of morum more difficult to dislodge; and yet as they looked round upon the uneven well-bottom, torn into rude crevices and ragged ridges, only the hard dry stone appeared. But suddenly Raghu, dropping the basket he was loading, rushed to the side of the well and began to examine carefully the bottom of a great slab of stone.

“See,” Raghu exclaimed excitedly, holding up his apparently moistened hand, “Isn’t this water? *Máro!*” (Strike!) he shouted to the man with the pick; but without waiting for him to obey, seized the implement himself, and with a mighty blow and a still mightier upheaval, tore away the face of the slab.

“Again!” shouted the three excited men, as the broken stone revealed sure signs of moisture on the soft rock beneath; and again the pick sank deep into the damp morum. And then as the old man tore it away, the water bubbled out, trickling in a discoloured stream into the crevices beneath.

“*Shábásh!*” “*Bahut achchhá!*” the shout of joy broke in varied exclamations from their lips; only however to be immediately checked, as they saw the hole quickly widen and the

stream of water grow clearer and increase. It seemed to them as though a subterranean reservoir must have been struck; and for a moment or two the instinct of self-preservation occupied their whole attention; quickly the men were drawn up in the basket, the last tying the tools to a rope, ere with nervous haste, he scrambled out of the water, now fast approaching his knees; and they were barely out of the well before the place where they had been working was filled with water.

Down on their knees they dropped in a brief prayer of thanksgiving; and then, could you blame them? a feeling of exultation and triumph burst up in their hearts, and, rushing out into the village street, past the bunya shops and on to the *kachahri* of the *Kámasdár* they shouted, "*Páni mil gayá! Páni mil gayá!*" (We've got water! We've got water!) The villagers would not believe it till, hurrying out of shops and houses, they rushed to the side of the well and saw the fast increasing water. It would have been difficult perhaps to analyse their thoughts; a feeling of revulsion seemed to fill the hearts of many, and more than one exclaimed "*Sach hai, páni to mil gayá!*" (It's true, they've got water!) And probably in the mind of not a few the con-

viction was uppermost that the God of the Christians had not failed them.

Into all the countryside went the news that the Christians had procured water in a well, where even the Brahmins prophesied they would fail, and that without the aid of priest or pundit or any service to the gods. And from all the villages round about the people came to see the "Jesus Christ well," as it was commonly called. It was the best sermon we had ever had in the district. From that day we heard no more of the Christians being turned out; the well had conquered and the followers of Jesus were received into the community. A few weeks later they were holding a service in the house of the *Kāmasdār*, preaching to some of their once bitter opponents of the love of Jesus.

X

TAKING A CITY

AMONG the native chiefs of Central India none has proved more interesting in Mission history than the late Maharaja of Dhar. For many years suffering from an infirmity which robbed him of the use of his limbs, he displayed a vigour of mind and an interest in public affairs that not only endeared him to his people, but won for him the admiration and esteem of the British representatives. Heir to an estate that had held together only by British intervention, he showed his gratitude by loyalty to the suzerain power and a wise administration. Most of our missionaries have paid a visit to his capital. On the occasion of the proclamation of Her Majesty Queen Victoria as Empress of India, Mr. Builder, being present in Dhar, was asked, as a part of the function, to engage in prayer. Significant was this occasion when, as a Christian Queen was proclaimed Empress over a non-Christian land, Christian prayer for the first time ascended in that non-Christian court.

I had several times visited Dhar, holding evangelistic services in and about the capital; but in the cold season of 1894-5, for several weeks we laid regular siege, setting up the Gospel tent outside the city wall. Crowds flocked to our meetings, and night after night the tent was filled to overflowing. On several occasions we used the lantern views, but more frequently we gave simple Gospel addresses, telling over and over again the wonderful story of the Evangel and man's redemption from sin, till the whole city rang with the Name of Jesus.

Like the lovely bloom on the forbidding cactus tree, Dhar is one of Nature's gems set down in the midst of bleak plains and woodless hillsides. As one climbs the barren rock-strewn hill, that bars the approach from Mhow, a scene of enchantment suddenly bursts on the vision. Below lies a valley of fairy lakes and glorious woodland, closing in upon a patch of red-tiled roofs and white, shining domes. To the right, the fort, a huge yet shapely monster in red sandstone, but once breached, and that by British guns, dominates not only the town but the landscape. Beyond the lake at our feet and away to the left stretches a noble grove of mango-trees, surrounding the Maharaja's garden and guest

house. Far to the right, behind the fort, lies a still larger lake, and on its further border, crowning a hilltop, the famous temple of *Kālī Devī* hovers like a bird of evil omen on the horizon. Grouped beneath the walls of the fort and about the open parade ground in its front, lie a few buildings without the city walls, the school, dak-bungalow and post-office, the fruits of days of peace; while the city itself, except for the palace, temple domes and a few patches of wall and roof-tops, is lost in the profusion of tropical foliage.

It was in the mango grove near the garden we had made our encampment; and here every afternoon flocked the young men of the city, attracted many of them doubtless by curiosity, but all led round to talk of the responsibility of life and the New Way. The mornings we spent in the *mahallas* and neighbouring villages, and the evenings at the Gospel tent. One afternoon we were invited to hold a meeting in the Maharaja's large schoolhouse. The building is a plain yet massive structure, surrounding the four sides of a quadrangle, and capable of accommodating some 400 pupils. Our meeting, which numbered about 300, including nearly all the officials and educated young men of the city, was held in the

large front class-room, overlooking the main roadway. It was an inspiring as well as a picturesque gathering; the white muslin coats, silk scarves and red turbans of the Maratha officials, who were grouped in the front benches, set off keen intellectual faces and bright questioning eyes, that showed our words were not falling on inattentive ears. The first address was in English, a plain, simple presentation of the gospel message. This was followed by singing, to the accompaniment of the baby organ, and an address in Hindi. One of the leading officials present then asked permission to repeat the substance of the addresses in Marathi, the mother-tongue of many present. It was only an hour's talk, but an hour of immense possibilities, for it was spent by the flower and youth of that heathen city in contact with the Gospel of Jesus.

The officials came frequently to our regular meetings in the tent, which was erected on a corner of the parade ground opposite the school building. The interest in these never diminished throughout our whole visit; crowds of from two to five and six hundred flocked nightly to the tent, until we calculated that probably the whole city, at least the male portion, must have been present at one or other of our meetings.

The reports of these enthusiastic gatherings brought Mrs. Russell and several of the Mission ladies out to visit us, whom the State authorities joined us in welcoming, ordering commodious tents to be erected for their use. Little did any of us suspect the issues that lay hidden in that gathering of God's missionary servants beneath the walls of the far off heathen city. One afternoon the court carriages were sent to summon us to the palace to an interview with the Maharaja. All were included in the invitation, special mention being made of the baby and baby organ. On reaching the palace, an unpretentious though many roomed structure facing an empty square in the heart of the city, we were ushered through the durbar hall, rich with hangings of silk and tinsel and many coloured lamps, into a small plainly furnished audience chamber, where His Highness, seated on a silver throne, received us with Oriental effusion. Though he himself was plainly, almost carelessly dressed, gorgeously caparisoned *chaprassís* surrounded the throne, one wielding the huge yak-tail punkah, another holding his scarf, while the ubiquitous private secretary, under whose auspices our visit had been arranged, ever hovered near to catch the Maharaja's slightest wish. Though we would

have preferred to stand, we were all seated on chairs near to His Highness, that he might question each one as he wished. One could not but be struck, on nearer view, with the kind and genial expression that surmounted and lent dignity to that frail frame. He seemed pleased to hear our Christian hymns, especially one sung by our Native preachers in Marathi, his mother language; and listened attentively to the explanation of their meaning and to an account of our work.

After the ladies had held a private audience with the Maharani, who presented them all with mementoes of their visit, paying special attention to the little fellow, we returned to camp. We were the cynosure of many eyes as we traversed the bazaar in the Raja's carriages, and doubtless the thoughts of all went wandering after the consequences when Christianity touched the throne. As for ourselves, it seemed a fitting event to crown the many inspiring experiences we had enjoyed in that heathen city; it touched our imagination, as well as filled us with thankfulness, that from the low-caste labourers in the *mahallas* right up to the throne, the gospel message had not only penetrated but been graciously received.

Was it any wonder that as we gathered that evening round our altar under the mango-trees, visions of future conquest filled our minds? The stillness of night was round us; except for a few tomtoms at some belated marriage feast, the whole city was at rest; and it appealed to us with all the helplessness and trustfulness of sleep. We knew that the great gates were closed, but to our hopeful vision they seemed to be rolling back on their rusty, creaking hinges, with the reluctant conviction that never more could they bar the way to the Christ of God. It was in this solemn hour of prayer at the jungle's edge, with the fever of India's millions upon us, that Dhar burned itself into our hearts; and we determined to take no rest till the dumb appeal of its waiting people had been heeded, and some permanent means provided for teaching them the Christ message.

The significance of the opening of a new mission station can hardly be overestimated. It is the most conspicuous sign of a Mission's advance; it is the staking out of new claims, the definite and permanent assumption of obligation for the neighbourhood's evangelisation; it is a multiplication of the mission, a repetition of its institutions and agencies in another centre, and

when done after due deliberation and without crippling the older stations, is a most definite source of strength. The opening of a new station is none the less significant to the people; to them it is the unfurling of the banner of Christ in their midst, it means that the hitherto casual visitors have come to stay. To prejudice and superstition it is perhaps an unwelcome invasion, but to many it is a herald of friendliness and good cheer, and to all it is the conviction that the religion of the Christ has become a part of the community's life.

The opening of a new station, however, is not a hasty matter; the spirit of Christian imperialism has ever to contend not only with many obstacles but a large amount of conservatism and caution. But in this case the whole mission was enthused; over 2,000 rupees were subscribed by its members, an appeal made to the church at home, and a committee appointed to see the work begun. When, however, a few months later we came to face the task of making a permanent entrance into Dhar, our faith in the final result was confronted by no little uncertainty as to the difficulties in the way. There is a vast difference between a temporary visit to a place and a permanent occupation; many, whose curi-

osity and vanity together with a sense of hospitality, even welcome the transient visitor, would hesitate if not oppose his permanent residence. Nor was this uncertainty lessened by the refusal of our request for an audience with the Maharaja, before whom we wished personally to lay our plans. Could it be that his former attitude had changed, and sympathy been supplanted by suspicion? On our being referred to the *Naib-Diwán*, however, we were soon made to see the guiding hand of God. As we entered his *daftar*, the first object that met our eyes was a Christian Bible lying upon the table; it was a good omen. He listened sympathetically while we boldly preferred our request. We told him of our interest in Dhar, of the way in which we had been received, and of our intention to come and reside permanently, bringing the gospel with us. We also told him, for the missionary propaganda has its diplomacy, that our staff would include a lady doctor to minister to the ills of the women. We asked for enough land, either by sale or gift, for a mission bungalow and hospital, and help to purchase building material and to procure accommodation in the city for dispensary and preaching hall.

Experience had led us to expect difficulties.

Dr. Campbell had lived for a whole hot season in a native house in the Rutlam bazaar, before, for very shame, he was permitted to purchase a piece of ground for a bungalow; it was only after a somewhat similar experience by Dr. Buchanan, and no little opposition from the authorities, that land was purchased in Ujjain; in Barwai our men had been refused accommodation in the bazaar; and in the state of Bhopal missionaries were at that time refused even permission to labour. The native chiefs of Central India dislike alienating their land to foreigners who cannot become their subjects; and it would be unwise for us as missionaries to use our rights as British subjects to compel them to do so.

Though no immediate answer could be given to our request, we not only scoured the bazaar to look for accommodation for our work and helpers, but also the surrounding district in search of a suitable site for a bungalow. Our expectations were modest, nor did our faith equal that of our native Christian helpers, who wished us to ask for a valuable garden site near the Maharaja's parade ground; instead of which we chose an unoccupied piece of land on a bare hillside, some distance from the city wall.

Dr. Margaret O'Hara, who was one of those deputed to begin the work in Dhar, decided, after much deliberation and prayer, that as it was then impossible for the male missionary to accompany her, to go alone and open the dispensary, taking with her native helpers to carry on bazaar and village work. The wisdom of this decision was soon manifest; the *Diwán* on his first visit to her seemed captivated by the thought of all the good a lady doctor's presence presaged to the suffering women and children of the city and surrounding villages. Marvellous is the gift of healing in any land, but among the suffering and neglected ones of India, with nothing but the superstitious barbarisms of their so-called medical men, too often aggravating instead of mitigating disease, it comes as the very touch of God; and many a suffering creature, who would pass by the mission school and shun the church, will crawl on hands and knees to the mission hospital. Doubtless the fact that a medical missionary bulked so largely in the early beginnings of our mission in Dhar, accounted for the splendid success of our negotiations for land. The private secretary of His Highness, the Maharaja, in writing to ask if he might call on Dr. O'Hara, thus expressed him-

self: "I need not assure you how grateful we all feel to you for having started your so laudable undertaking, the need of which was so keenly and badly felt by the inhabitants of this town, especially the women."

Added to this were the sweet influences of a noble Christian woman. Alone in a heathen city, twenty-five miles from the nearest European, she ministered not only to the bodily needs of the women, but to the spiritual needs of all classes of the community. "I have any number of visitors here every day," she wrote, "people come here who do not come to the dispensary; . . . last night the wife of the *Diwán* sent two Brahmins out to ask me to sing our hymns. They stayed and asked all sorts of questions." Again, "I am as happy and full of peace as it is possible to be, had eighty-one patients this morning." In another letter, "I am going to have all the Dhar Christians here to dinner to-morrow night . . . Hindustani dinner." Thus she describes the first service in Dhar: "When I left there (she had been visiting a patient in the bazaar) a crowd followed me to the dispensary where I took my place on the verandah, on a cushion from my *gáři*, as there were no seats yet. . . . There were over sixty women

and children with me on one side, and the roadway and other side were full. We sang several hymns, after which Bhagaji read the commandments, and spoke for about twenty or thirty minutes. Before he had finished a boy asked for a favourite hymn, after which Bhagaji announced a meeting for 5 P. M.," and adds, "I am writing that you may rejoice with me over this Sabbath in Dhar." Thus to the faith and loving zeal of consecrated womanhood is due the honour of laying the foundations of the work in Dhar.

Meanwhile the negotiations for land were proceeding, the committee being invited out to finally decide on the sites for bungalow and hospital. There was some reluctance about granting the site we had asked for on the hill, the state officials not liking us to be so far from the city, and chiefly, I believe, because the Maharaja did not consider the site good enough for us. Probably few incidents in the history of India's missions have been more significant than this aged Hindu Prince, heir to the exclusive traditions of his forefathers and the hoary prejudices of caste and custom, and brought up in all the strictest tenets of Brahminical doctrine, taking such a marked and personal interest in the establishment of the teachers of an alien religion,

who had come to his capital but yesterday. He was the moving spirit of the whole transaction, traversing, spite of his paralysed frame, the several roads and by-paths that lead to the city and personally inspecting every available site; and it was at his suggestion that the piece finally agreed upon was chosen, a beautiful position near the fort and facing the parade ground, strange to say the very piece of land the native Christians had desired us to ask for. Besides the bungalow land, a most appropriate site for the hospital was granted just under the walls of the fort, and upon the main road leading into the city. Since then a further site has been granted for the orphanage, in all some twenty acres. The fact that the owner of the bungalow land, in addition to a compensatory site, received from the Maharaja some Rs. 1,100, will give some idea as to the value of the gift.

Dr. O'Hara was considerably disturbed a few days later to hear that the Maharaja was delaying to sign the deeds of gift until he had a promise from her. "What," she asked herself, "can it be? Surely he does not want me to promise not to preach the gospel!" Thank God it was no such demand, but a request for a promise that was only too willingly granted, a request that

showed the difficulty with which they understood our complete indifference to caste, as well as the spirit of liberality and true charity that underlay the Maharaja's deference to custom; he wished her to promise that all comers to the womens' hospital, rich and poor, and of every caste, would be treated alike.

Building was begun almost immediately by Mr. F. H. Russell who had been appointed to the Mission in Dhar, and in a few months our missionaries were under their own roof. The mission report for the year says: "The speed with which the opening of Dhar was thus accomplished was phenomenal. The history of mission work, at least in Central India, can show no such record. To have sites granted, buildings started, almost every branch of the work established, all within six weeks of the first arrival of a missionary in the station, is a degree of success in our first beginnings which we gratefully acknowledge as a special favour from God."

XI

PLANTING A MISSION AMONG THE BHILS

THE Bhils are not descendants of the Aryan invasions but children of the soil, the wild race of hunters and cultivators who originally occupied the fertile plains of Malwa and Rajputana; and who, to make room for their more skilled and powerful conquerors, were driven into the mountain fastnesses of the Vindhya and neighbouring hills, from which no power has been able to dislodge them. Under the Moghul rulers, they were a peaceable and hard working people, but with the advent of the Maratha invaders, they were outrageously abused. They were flogged, hanged and put to death on any pretext; with noses and the ears shaved off, they were exposed to the boiling sun; they were thrown by hundreds from tall cliffs and their women were outraged and mutilated. Abuses like these changed the peaceful and law-abiding, though naturally restless and roving Bhils, into a wild and hunted people.

Goaded by such cruelty and injustice, they

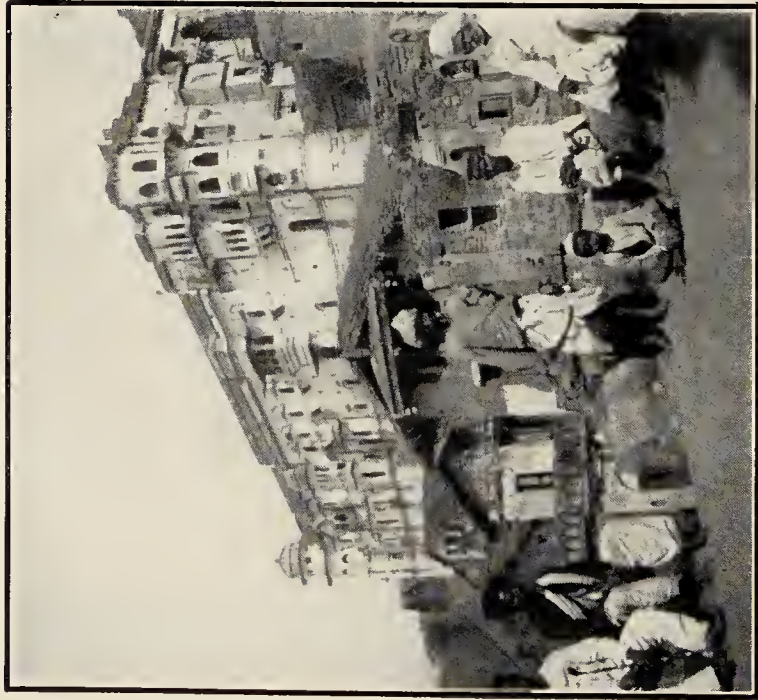
have until lately, and in some places up to the present time, maintained a plundering and lawless spirit, stealing cattle or taking toll of the wood-cutters and bullock trains which pass through their jungles, and appealing, especially in famine times, to force of arms for their necessities. But by long-suffering kindness and abundant tact, the British are gradually winning these people back to a condition of comparative quiet and law observance. Bhil regiments have been established; and men thus trained have been used to quell their more turbulent neighbours. They have been brought to a large extent directly under British protection, and assured a proper recognition of their rights as subjects of the King Emperor.

Short, black men, thin-limbed and wiry, with fierce looking faces, high cheek-bones, thick matted hair and scanty clothing, the Bhils are a quick, active race, famous as hunters, handling the bow and arrow, which are their only weapons, with remarkable skill, and fearing not to face the tiger in his den. But they fly the face of strangers. When first we went among them in the little valley of Kurdi, up among the mountains, they would hide in the jungle or secrete themselves in their huts till we had departed. It

was a sad comment on the injustice they had been called on to endure for many years, that in many cases it was only the men who fled, fearful lest we were the agents of the money-lender or representing some one in authority. It was only by our singing the Christian hymns and preaching the gospel of love, and their being persuaded that we had no connection with the officials, that they were finally drawn from their hiding-places.

They live in a meagre way, in houses built of bamboo, leaves and grass, sometimes plastered with clay. Their implements are few and primitive, their clothing a loin-cloth, and their food corn, millet, and the fruits of the chase. They are very fond of liquor, which they brew from either the toddy palm or *mowa*-tree; and many of them are terrible drinkers, keeping up their bouts for days, and at times growing so crazy as to endanger one another's lives. The Bhils, however, do not live together in villages as do the Hindus, but in *páls* or groups of huts, some distance apart, each surrounded by its own little field of grain, and sometimes enclosed by a fence of upright poles interlaced horizontally with bamboos.

While the Bhils recognise *Máhádev*, the Hindu



ON THE ROOF OF UNKARJI'S TEMPLE.



BHIL SOLDIERS AND A RAW RECRUIT.

god, in fact claim to be his descendants, they are very superstitious and ignorant, commonly paying their devotions and offering sacrifices to some sylvan fetich, whose shrine is erected on a deserted hilltop or within a lonely jungle shade. I have frequently seen collections of these *devas* and *devīs* among the wilds of the Vindhya, chief among them probably being *Mâtā*, the goddess of smallpox, a disease which is very prevalent. They are also great fatalists. "The common answer of a Bhil," says Malcolm, "when charged with theft or robbery, is 'I am not to blame, I am *Māhādev*'s thief.' In other words my destiny as a thief has been fixed by God." (On the other hand they are intensely loyal to their chiefs and leaders, refusing neither to die nor commit murder at their command. A British officer, who had been operating against a similar jungle tribe, the Santals, thus wrote: "They did not understand yielding; as long as their national drums beat, the whole party would stand and allow themselves to be shot down." Such words would be no less true of the Bhils. Moreover they are perfectly loyal to their women, who have great influence and are held in high esteem. Though they have often to suffer for their husbands' wrong-doings, they do

it willingly, knowing they will not be deserted.) With all their faults they are a simple, tractable people, with less deceitfulness than their more privileged neighbours and are capable of development into strong, earnest men.

Two facts specially commended the Bhils to us as a field for missionary effort; they have not been won over from their primitive superstitions to either of the more permanent religions of India, and they are not burdened with caste. The conviction, however, that the slow assimilating processes of Hinduism were bound, sooner or later, to engulf them, urged us to be instant in our efforts for their evangelisation.

The Bhils of Central India are largely within the district under the supervision of the political agent of Bhopawar; and it was really this official who finally precipitated the long cherished ambition of our mission to begin work among this needy people. Happening to visit him in connection with another matter, he enquired concerning our work among the Bhils; expressed the deepest sympathy with our desire to uplift them; and, urging us to begin a special mission on their behalf at once, volunteered to help, as far as his position allowed, in getting it established. Such an opportunity was not to be

neglected and the matter was immediately laid before the church at home, with the result that permission was granted to go on without delay and establish work.

The first duty was to select a site somewhere in the vast hill country that covers the whole western part of the Central India agency. It was for this purpose a little party of two missionaries and several native helpers, with a tonga and single bullock cart, set out towards the end of October, 1895, for a trip through the Bhil country. Leaving Mhow, our journey lay almost due west for sixty miles across Southwest Malwa, through Dhar, where we paid the young mission a brief visit, to Sirdarpore, a small cantonment of Bhil soldiers, and the seat of the Bhil political agent. We found our friend the inspirer of our present effort, had left for England; but the temporary occupant of his position, together with his assistants, did all they could to help us, giving every information as to route, etc., and sending word to several of the native chiefs to see that our journey was made as comfortable as possible. Civilisation and comfort however, were practically deserted when we left Sirdarpore and the good roads, for the rough trip down the Vindhya and along the foothills towards Rajpore.

It was our intention to travel west to the extreme limit of the Central India agency, and then turning north strike the new railway to Godra and return via Rutlam. As our trip was long we travelled light, a small tent, bedding, clothes and food.

In spite of this the first day's journey out of Sirdarpore was fraught with more difficulties than we had anticipated; and night overtook us in the middle of the steep *gháts*, before we had reached any suitable camping place. Our road followed the dry course of a mountain torrent, steep and boulder strewn, and so narrow in places that we could touch the rock on either side. Buchanan was ahead with the empty tonga, and he seemed to have no little difficulty in finding two parallel passages among the stones, where wheels and horses could run together. I was in command of the descent of the bullock cart. We had tied a drag rope to the wheel manned by a native helper and myself, while another stood by to block the cart with stones if the descent proved too fast for both us and the oxen. All was going on as satisfactorily as the rough roads would permit, when suddenly, as the cart plunged from the top of a great boulder, the ropes binding axle and cart

together broke asunder, and the whole load slid forward on top of the oxen, felling them as though they had been shot, and frightening the poor driver till his face almost turned white in the moonlight. None of them however were any the worse; but we were forced to unload and carry everything to the foot of the hill, where we gathered, like a shipwrecked crew, round the wreckage of our bullock cart. Fortunately the moon was full, and with the jungle almost as light as day, we were soon able to mend the cart sufficiently to proceed on our way. We were either too formidable or too fagged and hungry looking to prove any temptation to the wild beasts, for we travelled through their jungles till near midnight before we found a suitable camping place. We halted at last on the banks of a noisy, rushing mountain stream; but too tired to erect our tent, we made a cup of tea, and, throwing ourselves down beneath a wide-spreading *mowa*-tree, slept till daylight.

For the next two days our journey led through a broken yet beautiful country. The hillsides were still clothed in green; *temrû*, *tîrnich* and thorny *ber*, with an occasional yellow-clad *guniyâr* or patch of jungle teak, though none of them much in themselves, were woven into a,

mantle of beautiful verdure. Dotted here and there among the trees, we could see the little grass huts of the Bhils, surrounded by miniature fields of maize and *jowár*. Every few miles the road was crossed by a limpid stream fresh from the mountains, that splashed along merrily beneath the shadow of mighty banyan, dark-hued *mowa* and graceful palm-tree. As the country was strange and the tracks often very difficult to follow, we were obliged to procure guides, and to renew them at each village; for though the Bhil knows every foot of ground within five or six miles of his hut, but few of them ever venture beyond.

At night we would camp on the banks of some clear flowing stream, beneath a many pillared banyan; and in the morning, after a hurried breakfast, send off the native helpers with the bullock cart, arranging to meet them at a rendezvous in the evening, while we moved on more leisurely in the tonga, stopping to gather information on the way. On one or two occasions this led to some confusion. The third day out the guides with the bullock cart, either misunderstanding the route, or afraid to venture into unfriendly territory by taking the right one, led the native helpers in an entirely different direc-

tion, and we found ourselves in the evening at the place of appointment, without tent, food or bedding. Fortunately we had rugs and were not afraid to camp in the open; so we slept on the tonga cushions, with saddle for pillow; and the remains of the midday lunch kept body and soul together till we found the lost camp next morning many miles away.

Our first objective point was a small town, the seat of the pretty Hindu chief, with whom we spent a pleasant evening telling of our mission and the message we had come to proclaim. He was still a young man, but evidently unawakened to any ambition either for himself or for his people. Good natured and hospitable, with a face that betokened no little potentiality, and a body that might contain a noble mind, he appeared to be the creature of the thousand enervating influences that surround the Indian throne. With exceptional opportunity for benefiting his people, and subjects peculiarly responsive, to whom paternal government is almost of the nature of an instinct, like too many of India's chiefs, his horizon was limited; he lacked the inspiration of a great ideal and the touch of the divine spirit to set his soul on fire of God. In this, as in all the towns and large villages, we found many

Hindus, Brahmin priests and officials, Bunya shopkeepers and the village tradesmen, whose influence was often anything but helpful to the unsophisticated Bhils. These latter formed almost the entire population of the district, living in scattered groups of huts or *pāls*, each ruled over by a *tarwī* or headman, who in turn acknowledged the authority of the Hindu chief or central power.

We preached in each large centre as we journeyed. Among the Hindus we had good audiences, but we found it difficult not only to get within talking distance of the Bhils, but to make ourselves understood when we did; for they speak a mixed language of Hindi, Gujarati and apparently some remnants of a primitive tongue of their own, and much of what we said to them was therefore unintelligible.

X In our search for a location for the Bhil Mission we were guided by several considerations. We desired our work to be central, and within reach of as large a number of people as possible. We were anxious also that it should be in a locality where the soil was good and water plentiful, as it was our purpose to develop training along the lines of industrial and farm work. The healthiness of the site for our missionaries and its accessi-

bility from without were further important considerations. But we were particularly desirous of settling in a neighbourhood where Hinduising tendencies among the Bhils were least apparent. Though they are not assimilated as yet to any of the more settled religions, the development of towns, the introduction of priest and bunya and especially of Hindu cultivators were fast moving in that direction. Many of these requirements we found to be fulfilled in Ali Rajpore, a state to the extreme west of Central India. It is almost in the centre of the Bhil district, and within reach of some two million people; a large part of it is plain, the soil is good, wood and water plentiful and the natives still in their primitive condition. We would almost have recommended this at once but for its inaccessibility from either the railway or our other stations, the nearest point on the railway being forty miles away and over an almost impassable road.

In the absence of the Raja, who was pursuing his studies in the Raj Kumar college (for princes) at Indore, we were most cordially welcomed to this state by the *Diwán*, who united with the other officials in making our visit most pleasant. We were made the guests of the state, established in the Raja's guest house, and practically

given the freedom of the town, the officials doing what was in their power to supply us with the desired information and further the object of our journey. From the *Diwán*, an astute Brahmin, and an old friend of one of our missionaries, Dr. Campbell, we learned much concerning the customs, language and religion of the Bhils, as well as their accessibility, or rather inaccessibility, and the manner of reaching them. In company with another of the citizens of the town, himself an educated Bhil, we paid a visit one evening to a *pál* not far from town. The presence of our guide allayed the fears of the timid people; and sitting in front of their houses beneath the gourd vines, the moonlight playing fitfully across their faces, between the flickering shadows of the vine leaves, they listened attentively while we told our story. But with all their attention they could take in so little of what we said; it was all so new, the language was strange; and it only served to emphasise more fully the need of some special effort on their behalf.

The trip north from Ali Rajpore was for the first two or three days over a better road; the country, though none the less picturesque, was more level, and had broader plains. Spite of this, however, the camp and the bullock cart managed

again to get lost, the guides evidently purposely avoiding the place of rendezvous. We ourselves were late in arriving; it was a lonely village deep in the Bhil jungle; and we found no one awake, or at least willing to disclose himself to the strangers; nor did our search reveal any place in the village where we could find a night's lodging. Hunting around in the dark for a well, we found one just on the edge of the jungle; and, unyoking and watering the horses, sat down to wait for the dilatory bullock cart. By ten o'clock we had given up hope; so making ourselves a cup of tea, without either milk or sugar, but with a peculiarly strange taste, and scraping the pieces of broken biscuit from the bottom of the tiffin basket, we made a meal which was the first since breakfast; and, wrapping ourselves up in the rugs, lay down beneath the trees, beside the camp-fire, to sleep. Buchanan found some stones to lie on, but I preferred the bare ground. Spite of the hard bed, and an unguarded camp, for we had been unable to procure a watchman, and the gruesome company of a tiger haunted jungle, we slept soundly till daylight.

Hunger is a restless companion, and our waking thoughts naturally turned to the lost camp and our provisions. We felt that it would be

useless to try the village, for even if we did procure flour it would be valueless without cooking vessels, and the cart could not be far away. I determined however that before starting we should have a cup of tea, so taking the kettle, which we always carried, with a little tea, in the tonga, I went over to fill it at the well where we had procured the tea water during the night. The well was built square with steps leading down to a platform by the water's edge. What was my surprise to see down on this platform a fat, greasy-looking bunya washing himself. "What are you doing down there?" I asked, somewhat sharply. "*Are, Sāhib!* I'm washing myself," he replied without ceasing the rubbing at his grimy-looking limbs. "What!" I said, "in the well?" "Oh, this is not the drinking well, Sahib, this is the washing well." My thoughts I dare not describe; needless to say we set out without our cup of tea.

Retracing our steps over the journey of the previous day, we watched carefully for any signs of the stray bullock cart. It was very hot and we were very hungry, but we did not see a sign of habitation for some two hours, till suddenly we came on a Bhil, busy in the jungle. He had no time to flee, so in desperation we tackled him

for something to eat, persuading him, after much Hindi and more signs, to bring us a little milk. This we boiled, for want of another vessel, in the *lota* (drinking cup) together with a little oat-meal we found in the tiffin basket, but without either salt or water—we were shy of wells that morning. It was a slim breakfast, and from his looks as he watched the operation, evidently a revelation to the poor Bhil, but it dulled the edge of hunger. A few hours later we found the cart tracks, easily distinguishable by the wide tire marks from those of the rude *gārís* used by the Bhils. It was night, however, before we finally caught up to them, at a village many miles away, after being separated for thirty-six hours.

As we neared Jhabua the country got broken and hilly again and we found the steep rocky approaches to the river ford near the town, a severe strain on the tonga. Here again, thanks to the political agent, we were given a hearty welcome by the *Diwán*, and everything provided for our comfort. The chief function was a visit to the mouldy old palace, that seemed to have stood the siege of sun and rain for many ages, where we were introduced to the Raja. He expressed a strong desire to be photographed in his regal robes, seated in the throne room; but roy-

alty was beyond the capacity of my camera. From the *Diwán* we learned that the Bhils in this state had been quite subdued, but not in any way civilised; though their potentiality for this was evidenced in several well educated Bhil boys we were shown in the Raja's college. "Until his heart is reached," said the *Diwán*, "and higher motives implanted, the Bhil will always remain the wild man of the woods."

It was in this State, after we had completed our tour of the whole district, in a healthy, well wooded and well watered spot, some few miles from the railway, we finally chose the site which we determined to recommend to the Mission Council as being, if not as ideal a site as Ali Rajpore, at least much more accessible. Before our council could meet, however, the Brahmins had been at work, and the land, which was in the gift of the Queen Mother, was refused us; nor were any negotiations for a site in the same neighbourhood successful. A few months later the political official, whose sympathy and encouragement had at first been instrumental in precipitating this movement, returned from his trip to England. I was struck with his reply, when immediately on his return I went out to tell him of our non-success: "I am not sorry,"

he said, "for I think you will be able to procure a better site, with not only the advantages of the one you sought, but in a more densely populated district, and where Hinduisng influences will be much less felt." His long personal acquaintance with these people led us to place the greatest reliance upon his advice, and we agreed to visit him a few months later, when he would be in camp in the Bhil district, and see some of the sites he would recommend.

It was in January of '97, more than a year after our first tour, that we were invited to meet the political agent at his camp in the valley of Amkhut, near Ali Rajpore. ✓ On this occasion we travelled light, and the road was not only better known but in better condition, having been put in order for our host who was on tour. We found his camp at the end of a beautiful valley, just beyond a dense and magnificently wooded jungle. The camp itself was an imposing sight, for the representative of the Queen-Empress travels in state. On the bank of a bright, clear stream, with a beautifully clad hillside climbing out of the trees beyond, were erected the dwelling tent, dining, durbar and guest tents. Across an open square, shaded here and there by magnificent *mowa*-trees, lines of elephants, camels,

horses and bullocks, tethered in military order stood out against a background of palm-trees and hillside. At one end were grouped the tents of the native clerks and assistants, with women and children gossiping and playing round their doors, and at the other the military escort of Bhil soldiers in Khaki tunics and gay turbans—it was a veritable city in the wilderness. Beyond lay a scene of sylvan enchantment, a broad deep valley watered by a noisy, splashing stream, whose well wooded banks rolled steadily up to the hills on either side. Dotted thickly over the valley, some on commanding knolls, some bunched together in the fields, and others hidden in the bends of the stream, were the thatch-roofed huts of the Bhils. A fertile soil, wood and water in plenty, at either end a road leading out into the thickest part of Bhildom, and not a sight of bunya or Hindu temple for many miles—surely this was an ideal spot for our Mission. Moreover it was healthy, the only drawback being its inaccessibility, 100 miles from our nearest station. Our good friend the political agent gave us *carte blanche* in the choice of a site; and under the guidance of the state *Diwán*, my brother and I made a tour of the neighbourhood, only in the end to come back to the hill before the camp,

which for water supply, healthiness and situation, commanding as it did a view of the whole length of the valley, was almost ideal.

We remained several days in the camp of the agent, cultivating the acquaintance of the people and the district. The administration of the camp itself proved no less interesting than its appearance was picturesque. Business was conducted with perfect thoroughness and tact. Moving about from centre to centre, oftentimes out of the beaten tracks, the political officer made himself thoroughly acquainted with his agency. His durbar tent was open to all comers, low as well as high. The agent was prepared to hear the slightest grievance; several times I saw a group of timid Bhils, with some trifling complaint, that doubtless loomed big on their limited horizon, stand on the outskirts of the camp, overawed by the spread of canvas, the lane of elephants, the military and the scarlet-robed *chaprassís*, until the sharp eye of a fair-haired, slightly-built man, in a suit of flannels, detected them, and sending for them to state their case, listened with as much patience as though they had been a deputation from the palace. It is by such men, rather than her military, that England holds India.

Our friend could show us no more suitable site than the valley of Amkhut; and here it was finally arranged our mission should be located. By the kindness of the state authorities, who so nobly seconded the sympathies of the agent, sixteen acres of land were granted as well as free timber for building purposes. There was some difficulty at first in handing over the land, as part of it was occupied; and with customary conservatism the owner was unwilling to exchange it for another site. It happened a few weeks later, that he was mauled by a panther when out hunting, and was brought in badly injured to Dr. Buchanan's tent, where he was not only successfully treated, but made the loyal friend and coadjutor of the mission. Dr. Buchanan was chosen as our first missionary to the Bhils; and with none to help him but a few native Christians, this earnest man set to work to fell trees, quarry stone, make bricks and burn lime, teaching these varied pursuits to the unskilled Bhils, as they gradually came under his influence; for he was wisely determined to have no foreign, non-Christian element to poison the minds of these simple people. He was peculiarly fitted for this work, in that he combined with his biblical and medical knowledge a prac-

tical mind and an energetic body. They were very suspicious at first, all sorts of stories as to our purpose being afloat. Quite unused to discipline and regular work, they were slow to learn; but by kind and skillful treatment of the many sick, not only of men and women, but even of cows and goats, which are the Bhil's chief possession, the missionary gradually won his way to their hearts. The fruit soon began to be gathered, the former occupant of the mission land being among the first to be baptised.

As an illustration of this growing influence, Dr. Buchanan tells the following story in his first year's report: "As I was returning in the early night on my pony from Rajpore, coming along the winding cart road in the jungle, within half a mile of the building work, I heard the voices of those who were wending their way home. A sudden turn around a bush revealed to them a man on horseback. With a warning cry and instinctive spring, like a brood of wild partridge, young and old fled behind some bush or hiding-place. It was the work of a moment. The next some one sang out in a happier key, '*Bábá hai, Sirf Bábá hai*' (It is father, only father). And then out they came from their shelter, some twenty or thirty, with joyful expressions of

greeting, as trustful as the mother brood when sheltered beneath the protecting wings."

Already several score of these timid creatures of the jungle have been brought into subjection to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; and largely as the work of their hands, there has arisen upon the hilltop beyond the camping-ground, not a temple to *Shív*, but a group of buildings dedicated to the service of the Living God. The valley of Amkhut shall never become the heritage of *Máhádev*; it has been sealed for a possession to the Son of God.

XII

IN A TIGER'S DEN

LEAVING the interesting little town of Kuksi, ere yet the morning sun had tempered the cool night atmosphere, we made our way across the rich alluvial plains, gleaming golden with ripening grain, to the foothills of the Vindhya. The road was little more than a stone-strewn pathway winding in and out through the low-lying scrub of teak, *ber* and thorny *bábul*; climbing the very nose of a sloping mountain spur, it led through a rocky cutting, choked with fine, white dust, and so heavy we were forced to dismount, into a piece of dense jungle, ribbed and scored with many hills and nullahs. Making our way through this we came out on a narrow plain in front of the quaint old village of Bagh.

What a weird place was this little village up in the hills; strange legends had gathered round its temples and the crumbling ruins of its queer old buildings; and rustic tradition claimed it as one of the halting places of the Pandavas in their wanderings across India. Even the bats seemed

to have found in it a special retreat; as we passed through the banyan grove, outside the village, on our way to the evening meeting in the bazaar, the great flying foxes (kalong) hung in festoons from the branches, like animated fruit. There must have been thousands of them still hanging there, though out to the distant sky line, far as the eye could reach, we could see a broad belt of whirling blackness, as phalanx after phalanx, they kept speeding away on their quest for food to the fruit trees of the neighbouring valley.

We camped beneath a wide-spreading *pīpal*-tree, just below the frowning walls of some ancient Nayak fortress. As conquest overthrows conquest, and people succeed people on the plains of India, they leave behind them but little history, save in the fossil deposits of their mighty strongholds and deep, stone-bound wells. The time-worn walls above us spoke of a more martial race and prouder spirit than the tame villagers and timid Bhils of to-day.

India is a land of mysteries; shut off by mountain barriers from the rest of the world, a little continent in herself, she has lived, except for periodical inroads through the gates beyond the Punjab, a history of her own. Races and religions have been born, fought out their brief

struggle, and passed away, with no historian to chronicle their story. In the midst of some deep jungle, dank with undergrowth, fetid with miasma, the haunt of cobra and tiger, one stumbles on some massive ruin that ages ago rang to the voice of song and instrument and the hum of busy life. Up through its crumbling arches and rent domes tower giant trees, while thick-knotted creepers grasp and tear at its loosening walls. But its lips are dumb; no written record lies buried in its tombs, no inscription crowns its portals. Such are the sphinxes of India in whose crumbling stones must be read her chequered story.

There are some monuments throughout India whose stones, though no less bare of inscription, tell many a tale, even to the superficial observer, from their structure or carving. Such was the chief ruin in the neighbourhood of Bagh. We had often heard of the caves of Bagh, and village tradition accredited them to the Pandava kings. We found them in a deep jungle, a mile or so from the village. About twenty feet up the sheer rocky hillside a gaping rent opened above a hewn platform, showing that the silent forces of nature had supervened upon the work of man, and destroyed the magnificence of the ancient

verandah. Beyond the ruins of the fallen portal, however, the real doorway remained intact, with more or less defaced windows on either side.

Within, all was dark; but when our eyes became accustomed to it, we saw an immense chamber, over eighty feet square, hewn out of the living rock. The roof, above which rose for one hundred feet the great hilltop, was supported by twenty-four pillars, twenty of them being in the form of a square, six on each face, and the other four in the centre, and all forming part of the original rock. The pillars were beautifully carved, the outside ones being in general form square, with plinth and toruses at the base and many-sided bands above; the centre pillars were round shafts with spiral ridges. Around the two sides and the rear was a row of seventeen cells, whose darkness was plutonic, while in the centre of the back wall was an antechamber fronted by two massive pillars. In the corner of the cave, squatted before a little fire whose smoke filled the air with a pungent odour, was a Hindu fakir. He had the same story to tell as the villagers; the cave was of Hindu origin and he was now its guardian.

After some talk with the old man we lit our lantern and set about exploring the darkness.

On either wall of the antechamber, much begrimed by smoke, we found images, in bas-relief, which in themselves confuted the village tradition as to the origin of the caves. The standing figure between two attendants was evidently that of Buddha, and this excavation was one of the cave temples of the old Buddhist monks. Ferguson, in his "Cave Temples of India," explains how the old monks, in their desire to have a place of worship less perishable than the wooden structures which still mark the shrines of Buddha in other parts of the world, and perhaps with an idea that their eternity would equal that of the hills themselves, hewed out of the living rock that vast system of caves, that marks the ancestral home of Buddhism in Western India. The alternating hard and soft trap formations of the Vindhya, lying in horizontal layers, favoured this design. Beginning with mere cells for mendicants, they gradually enlarged them into halls for assembly, schools and chapels or shrines. We were now standing in the antechamber of a shrine, and pressing on we found the little chamber with its sacred *dágoba*.¹ Like the greater *dágobas* we had seen

¹ A *dágoba* is a cone-shaped structure erected by the Buddhists over a relic.

in Ceylon, it probably had once contained a relic; and on searching we found near the top the empty repository. The *dāgoba* itself was about fourteen feet high, and ten feet in diameter at the base, with an octagonal plinth, supporting a five foot dome above.

From the old fakir we learned that there were altogether seven of these caves reaching for upwards of half a mile along the hillside, but that the others were mostly broken down, and had become the haunts of wild beasts. He also warned us that there was a tiger somewhere in the neighbourhood, who had committed many depredations on the village cattle.

Returning to daylight, we examined the exterior of the cave more carefully. The crazy flight of stone steps was evidently of modern origin, and together with the image of *Ganpati* carved on the cave front, explained to us the presence and claim of the *sadhu*. Hinduism had set her seal on the shrine of Buddhism and claimed for her own its discarded halls. These caves, that once rang to the solemn chant of the hymns of Sakyamuni, heard nothing now but the muttered *mantras* of some travelling fakir, or the prayers of the village women.

The second cave was smaller than the first and

unfinished; the third had evidently at one time been a magnificent hall or *vihāra*, but on account of the soft nature of the rock, towards its centre, was now much ruined. It was about 100 feet square, its roof being supported by forty pillars, eight on each face and twelve forming an octagon in the centre. It also had twenty-four cells, a shrine and a *dāgoba*, like the first cave. But its most striking feature was its beautiful fresco painting, covering the whole roof and four feet of the upper portion of the walls, representing intertwined vegetable patterns, and all seemingly as fresh as the day it was put on. There had been figures also on the lower walls, but they were now much defaced. The fourth cave, opening off the same verandah as number three, was a long plain room, with two rows of pillars, which, it is surmised, was probably intended for a *dharmsāla* or rest-house for travelling monks.

The remaining caves Ferguson describes as "much ruined and scarcely worth detailed description." Their overhanging verandah had broken down, not only completely blocking up the platform, but hurling tons of stone from the hilltop above into the defile beneath. It was with the greatest difficulty, therefore, we made

our way within the fallen mass along the hill front. Sometimes we were lighted by openings in the rock, but oftener we were in complete darkness and compelled to use the lantern. Disturbed bats swished past our faces, while the timid creatures, whose haunts we were invading, scurried away at our approach. That the caves were seldom visited by man, could be seen by the entire lack of any trace in the pulverised excrement that formed a soft carpet beneath our feet.

As we approached the sixth cave we found it in almost impenetrable darkness. It was completely broken down, and, though of considerable extent, the barrier of fallen stones prevented us from exploring its recesses. It had however the same side chambers noted in the other *vihâras*, and from one of these I soon heard Drew calling: "Oh, here's another one, bring the light." In the back of the chamber was a small hole, either cut or broken into a similar chamber beyond. Climbing through, the lantern revealed to us the floor strewn with excrement and large bones, including the skulls of cattle. Immediately there recurred to us the fakir's warning, and involuntarily we exclaimed, "The tiger's den!"

The cave beyond was so broken down as to be hardly recognisable; not only the platform without but the whole front portion of the cave was blocked with fallen stone, leaving but a small opening to the outer air, some ten or fifteen feet above in the side of the hill. By means of the uncertain light, aided by our lantern, we examined the open part of the great cave, but not venturing too far. Like the previous ones it was quite in ruins, the centre and rear portion of the roof having fallen in, leaving great cavernous mouths of darkness gaping out at us from between the huge rocks. The ground of the clear space where we were standing, was strewn with bones; on one side lay almost intact the skeleton of an ox, with its shreds of meat hardly more than dry. Before us, at the entrance to a large hole, the rocks were pawed and dirtied as with the rubbing of some large animal, and that unpleasant odour of the feline carnivora filled the air.

Our presence was so unpremeditated that at first only the humour of the position struck us and we were inclined to joke, calling on stripes to come out and show himself. But suddenly something struck us; we saw nothing, we heard no cry, but that strange feeling came over us as

when some unseen presence is near; then it dawned upon us what would happen if, from any one of the many yawning recesses around us, our invitation were accepted, especially as we were armed with nothing more than a walking stick and lantern; the wonders of the cave immediately lost all interest, and that little patch of blue up above us developed a sudden and irresistible attraction.

When we stood down below in the jungle path, the bright sun shining overhead and the breath coming a little more regularly, I bethought me of a memento of the cave and especially a rather fine monkey skull I had noticed; but strange to say no one seemed willing to venture back for it; I have no doubt it is to be found there still.

As we wended our way back to camp many thoughts crowded upon me. Nothing could more fitly illustrate the folly of attempting to immortalise the teachings of religion by monuments of stone than these caves of Bagh. Hewn out, 1,500 years ago, with infinite labour, from the hillside to eternise the worship of Buddha, they were now the haunts of wild beasts, and associated with religion only in the village mind, and as belonging to a rival sect; while the movement

that gave them origin has long ago been forgotten in this, the land of its birth. The employment of the spectacular and ceremonial has frequently been advocated as the truest means of winning India's people to Christianity; and even among missionaries there has been no little tendency to monumentalise our religion by architectural display. Christianity in India can never hope to rival the beautiful structures of Moham-medanism and Hinduism; and it would be yielding to a fatal principle for her to attempt to do so. "God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"; may His church in India seek her monuments, not in piles of brick and stone, but in a living temple in the hearts of the people.

In the history of Buddhism one cannot look but with admiration on the life of its founder and his marvellous spirit, and with amazement on its sudden decline, especially in the land of its birth. However this may be due to its atheism, its fatal compromises, and the strength of its opponents, M. Barth traces it to the decline of missionary zeal and the monastic selfishness so well authenticated by these Bagh caves. Buddhism has flourished only in the land of its missionary effort; the successes of Mohamme-

danism have run parallel to its spirit of aggression; and in the history of Christianity this principle is not without its marked illustrations. May its lesson be burned into the heart and conscience of the Church of to-day. Let the little Christian, whose narrow horizon is limited by the spiritual comfort of his own soul, give up his monastic selfishness, and rid himself of the narrow, parochial view of Christian effort; let him climb the mountain top, and, standing beside those who have caught the Christ vision of the kingdom, behold its unbroken sweep over every kindred and tongue and people and nation.

XIII

THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS

THE pivotal factor in the question of India's conversion is that little group of native workers which gathers round each mission station. The missionary may be the guiding hand and hold the reins of power, but the real agency is the rank and file of those chosen from the native Christians for spiritual service. They are not perfect, these Indian Christians, the influence of centuries is not to be destroyed nor their evolution accomplished in a day; but considering the pit from which they have been digged, all the cursed heritage of idolatry, with its impure and degrading observances, the social restraints of caste and the terrible slavery of custom, the converts of India are a modern miracle. It is the lack of historical imagination and sympathetic perspective in the application of western standards, that are too often accountable for harsh judgments concerning the Indian Christian. The very characteristics for which he is condemned are not infrequently signs of his changing life.

For instance, one often hears the Indian Christian charged with less of loyalty in giving and in church observances than under the old religious influences. When one considers the motive for religious observances in Hinduism, the agonising fear lest one duty unperformed should imperil salvation, he must rather rejoice in the evidence that the conquering power of faith has broken the shackles. The Christian is learning a new motive for giving and a new purpose in service; and that loyalty to Christ will, and does increase the convert's measure of giving, no one acquainted with the facts can doubt. A census taken recently in our mission showed that thirteen per cent. of the native Christians were giving their tenth.

One is not confined to spiritual comparisons in estimating the character of India's Christians. His home, its cleanliness, its freedom from the lewd in act and conversation, its family worship and Christian song, his freedom from caste prejudices in the matter of neighbourliness and charity, his thriftiness and exemption from extravagances in dress and feasts, his independence, loyalty, sympathy for distress, and in general a bearing which demands universal respect, all testify to the development in him of a new life and char-

acter.¹ *The Indian Social Reformer*, a Hindu paper, after some criticisms on missionaries, says: "Even in the matter of conversion have they not raised the *Mahárs* into men from brutes, whom we with all our talk of universal brotherhood and universal sympathy and transcendental advaitism, allowed or forced to dive deeper into the mire of degradation for twenty centuries?" With all their imperfections, the Christians of India are a magnificent tribute to the power of the gospel, and though few proportionately, the promise of a glorious day when Christ shall rule in the hearts of India's people. "Foolish" they may be, "weak" and "despised," but it is from among these a new dynamic is being chosen which is to be the agency in establishing the kingdom of God in India.

It was only an ordinary village service, such as we hold six or seven times a day during the touring season, and only a simple village audience, including the *patel*, a few farmers, some bullock-

¹ While native Christians number only six per cent. of the population, native Christian boys form nearly three per cent. of those attending school, and native Christian girls supply twenty-nine per cent.; that is to say, while only twelve and five-tenths per cent. of the whole population of a school going age attend school, the Christians show an attendance of thirty-five per cent.

drivers from the neighbouring roadway, and the blacksmith and village loungers, seated on a broken cart across the way, and yet it was fraught with great things for the kingdom of God in Nimar. We were preaching in front of the low roofed shop of the village bunya, and, seated on a corner of the verandah, beside the row of grain baskets, was a strolling drum player. He was an insignificant looking chap, rough, ignorant, uncouth and, as I afterwards learned, a heavy drinker; and yet it was this young man of all the group and of many such audiences, whom the Spirit was choosing out for future service. Like most Hindus he had beneath that uncouth exterior his religious longings; and this teaching, though from strange lips and of an alien religion, had even at this first hearing a wonderfully attractive message. The two things that win the sympathy of the Hindu for the teaching of Jesus are the escape it offers from the endless wheel of self-effort and re-births, and the assurance it gives of complete salvation. This young man had a Christian relative, and through him he learned more of the New Way and was brought in touch with our Christian evangelists at Barwai.

About three months after his baptism, which

followed in due course, I was paying my monthly visit to Barwai; when at the close of the service the new convert came forward to see me.

“Padri Sahib,” he said, “I want to learn to read.”

“Very good,” I replied, “have you ever been to school?”

“Nay Ji.”

“Do you know your letters?”

“Nay Sahib.”

“Well, what do you want to learn to read for?” I enquired.

“Oh Ji,” he answered, with an earnestness only born of a soul on fire, “I want to be able to read the Christian *Shástra* for myself and to my caste people.”

“But see, brother,” I said, “you are a married man, you have the responsibilities of a home, you have your work and you do not even know your letters. It will be very difficult for you to learn to read.”

“Padri Sahib,” he replied, “the seed doth not yield its oil to him who refuses to labour; I will bear the burden but I want to learn to read.”

I did not wish to discourage him altogether, and yet I had already found him to be a young man with a fair opinion of himself and I was

unwilling to make the way easy for him; so I replied, "But there is no school down here, you would require to come to Mhow and there enter the alphabet class with the boys of four and five. You know what the village people will say about your going to live in Mhow, and how every one will laugh at seeing you in the baby class."

"The bullocks would not travel far," he replied, "if they listened to every squeak of the cart wheels; I am not afraid of what men will say, Sahib; I want to learn to read."

Such pleading was not to be withstood; the drum player came to Mhow and started school, a friend in the meantime helping him with his food. He went into the alphabet class with the small boys, sitting on their low bench with his knees almost to his chin; and there he struggled till the letters were conquered. He never once complained, but set himself determinedly to learn to read. His books seemed never out of his hand; many a time have I passed his hut late at night, when the rest of the men were in their beds, and seen his little lamp burning, while the raw student pored over his lessons. The Bible was his library, and he read it with such avidity and gained such a knowledge of its contents, as appeared to me incredible under the circum-

stances. He soon began to take a part in the work, teaching a class in the Sunday-school and accompanying the evangelists to the bazaar. Later he joined the Presbytery's classes, and within two years of his coming to Mhow, passed successfully a written examination in the four gospels, Genesis, Exodus, part of the Shorter Catechism and some controversial books on Hinduism, and with such satisfaction to the teachers as to be awarded a prize.

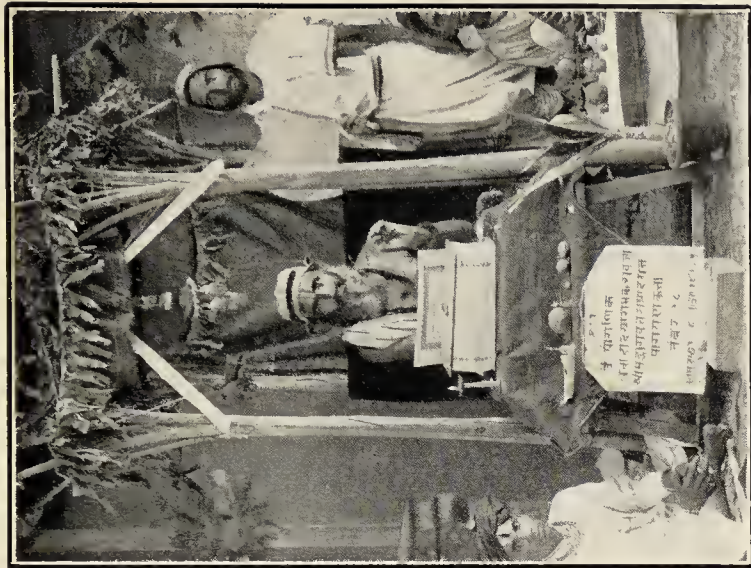
In the little groups that travel from town to town, preaching the news of the Kingdom, in the village schools and chapels that dot many a hillside and lighten many a valley in India, there are hundreds whose history would relate some similar story. From such material are we building up India's fighting force. With the peculiar character of the language of India, a people that think in metaphors, and whose intellectual and spiritual nature is coloured with the subtle, pantheistic teachings that have come down to them from hoary ages, so that even the corresponding terms which are to convey to them our spiritual truths have to be endowed with new content, the mouthpiece and exponent of Christianity to the masses must naturally be the children of the soil. Wise therefore is that missionary, whatever his

method of service, who, realising his own limitations, and that the veil of a foreign tongue and environment will never be fully removed, surrounds himself with a body of faithful disciples, whom he shall instruct and cherish, to whom he shall lend his inspiration, and who shall become in the power and fullness of the Spirit his hands, feet and mouthpiece, in bringing India's people into vital contact with Jesus Christ.

From time immemorial it has been the custom of India's *gūru* (teacher) to gather round him a body of disciples, whom he instructs in the sacred books and the doctrines peculiar to his cult. Sometimes they accompany him in his pilgrimages from shrine to shrine, listening to the wisdom that falls from his lips, and learning the duties of their calling as holy men; again he may abide in the temple at home, and send them out to gather alms or teach the doctrines of their faith. Moreover it was the custom of a greater teacher than ever trod the plains of India to give much of His time to the training of a little band of followers, who were to take up His message when He was gone, and carry it to the ends of the earth. May it not be that a wise Providence has so ordered it, that at the beginning of our work, it must of necessity be the same with the



A HINDU HOLY MAN.



GURU AND DISCIPLES.

missionary? The demands are so great, the labourers so few, we have been obliged to take raw villagers, without the barest rudiments of education, or young lads from the Christian schools, and shape them as best we could, while they laboured, into preachers and teachers. And considering how foreign not only the doctrines but especially the ethics of Christianity are to the Hindu mind, this need of continual personal contact between master and disciple is greatly emphasised. Western methods and western institutions, with their reliance upon so large a body of extraneous influences, do not meet the case. We are without the spiritual atmosphere in the East that surrounds the applicant for spiritual service in the West, both within and without the home. The missionary must be the constant companion of, influencing by his every word and action the little band of helpers he has gathered round him.

And so, as we journey from village to village, treading the dusty highroad or making our way through the fields of grain, seated by the well side or in the restful shadow of some mango grove, it is our custom to talk to these Christian companions of the things of the Kingdom, and to draw from flower and field, river and moun-

tainside, as well as the scenes of the marketplace, the lessons of the evangel. Then every afternoon, when we rest from our morning labours, and before the new work of the declining day begins, the Book is brought out and a lesson is taken from the lips of our Lord Himself. We usually pursue in these lessons some course of study, such as the parables, the sayings of Christ, or one of the gospels. Again this class in the district is continued, as far as possible, when we return at the close of the touring season to the station. Once a month the men are gathered in from the outstations and a day or two spent in hearing reports, especially of enquirers, holding them up in prayer before the Throne, dealing with any difficulties that may have arisen during the month, and in Bible study. During the missionary's visit to the outstation a similar course is pursued, only all Christians, as well as any non-Christian friends who may wish, are present.

There are three months in the year during the rainy season when village work, on account of the state of the roads, is practically impossible, except for a limited section round each station. It was the practice in our Mission, for years, that each missionary should gather all his workers round him for these months and give them a

course of study, as set by the Presbytery, and in which they were examined from year to year by a Presbytery committee. In the year '94 two of our missionaries carried on the instruction of their workers together, and the following year it was decided by the Presbytery to establish regular classes for Bible training, with a view to preparing men for the ministry, two members being appointed from year to year to conduct them. The lectures are all given in Hindi, and comprise a course of four years in Biblical Theology, Systematic Theology, Exegesis, Introduction, Church History, Homiletics and Comparative Religion. Examinations are held at the close of the classes, prizes awarded and standing granted by Presbytery. Already several men have completed their course and one been ordained to a congregation.

Doubtless it is a far hail from this primitively trained evangelist of the East to the college bred man of the West. But no little history must intervene before the village preachers of India can be expected to overtake the severe English curriculum which the university course at present lays down. It will be many years before the supply of labourers gets within such reasonable distance of the demand that men can be spared for so long a training or we can be dependent on

the limited number who succeed; the financial condition of the larger portion of our Christian community must improve before the expense of such a training can be borne; and there must be a considerable change, either in the ability of our village congregations to pay, or the salary a college graduate is accustomed to receive, before they come within sight of one another. Meanwhile let us not make haste.

But whither is all this tending? Men are being ordained and placed over congregations; presbyteries, synods and conferences are being formed; traditions as to creed and church government are being taught; and unconsciously perhaps the sectarianism of the West is being reproduced in the East. Not that there is sectarian ambition among the missionaries of India, for the law of comity is well observed, and no little cooperation carried out. Nor has sectarianism seized as yet on the genius of the Christian community, as is seen by the freedom with which they pass from the missions of one denomination to those of another. But we missionaries see the problems of the East too much in the categories of the West. Unconsciously we view her peoples in the light of our own religious history. We forget God's purpose for India has as much of continuity as

for either Europe or America, and that we are but a temporary factor in the fulfillment of this purpose. The element we supply is the witness to Jesus Christ. Once Christianised, the problem of the Church's form and safeguards to the ministry, if such be thought necessary, can well be left to the body of Christ in India under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. That the genius of Indian Christianity will differ from that of the West is only to be expected from the differences between the peoples themselves. While the Christianity of the West shines in the more active virtues of love, fervency and zeal, that of India will be marked by a predominance of the passive virtues of long-suffering, temperance and patience. Not only so, but Indian Christianity will doubtless colour and enrich with her peculiar life and teaching the Christian ideal and body of Christian doctrine throughout the world. But whatever be the purpose of the spirit for the Church in India towards the whole body of Christ, care must be taken that it be not thwarted by any imposition from without.

Not less important than their service as a dynamic in the preaching of the gospel to their fellow-countrymen, these Christian teachers and evangelists, in the very furtherance of their call-

ing, are gradually filling the minds of India's people with a new ideal of the true "holy man." Too long has the vagrant *sādhu* with his questionable morality and absurd appeals to superstition, filled up their religious horizon. It will require men of another class and developed upon a new ideal, men with more of the flavour of sanctity and more of the stamp of the divine, to awaken India to a realisation of her religious needs and accomplish the spiritual redemption of her people.

During one of our monthly visits to Barwai we found encamped there an assemblage of some 700 *sādhus* or holy men. This remarkable group quite filled the square beside the temples, overflowing the roadway into the vacant field beyond, some even being forced across the dirty, evil-smelling stream to spread their mats on the bank beyond. A few were housed in the temples; quite a number had large umbrellas which served for tents; but most had their unprotected bedding spread out on the bare ground. They were a motley crowd, some in flowing saffron, others in dirty white, but most clad in ashes and a loin-cloth; long matted hair, bleached to the colour of tow, hung in scraggy cords about their shoulders, or was gathered in great

coarse knots above their heads; white teeth and sleepy *gánja* bleared eyes looked out with a strange mixture of sensuality and cunning from pale ash-smeared faces. Some strutted about, fingering their heavy *dandas* (staves), or rattling their iron *chintá* (tongs); others were bringing water in their gourd vessels preparatory to the evening meal; while not a few were at their devotions, muttering *mantras* to their doll-like *devás* spread out on cushion thrones, or chanting in strange gabbling tones from the sacred books. Here also could be seen the religious montebanks, the man with a withered arm, the ascetic whose couch was a bed of upturned nails, and men with pierced cheeks and hook-scarred backs. And yet these were India's "Holy men," their inspiration in character and leaders in religious thought. That they had power was indicated by the fact that, unsolicited, the people of the village gave, not only their richest food, but even *gánja* to minister to their lust, at the rate, I was told, of eight annas a piece daily, or three times the wage of an average villager.

Unconsciously I turned from this grotesque and hypocritical sight to my companions. They were men taken from lower ranks in society than these, men of like passions and desires;

they too had their failings and their faults, they were still children and very much in need of guidance and help. But there was all the difference between night and day in their characters, their aspirations, and the power that moved in their lives. It has sometimes been suggested that the Christian preacher should model his life upon that of the *sādhu* and adopt his ascetic life and garb. But this quite mistakes the spirit both of present day sadhuism and of Christianity. Whatever of admiration we may have to spare for asceticism, and we cannot but acknowledge that it has been a failure as a power in Christianity, it must be remembered that both sadhuism and the priesthood in India to-day have degenerated into an occupation, and are looked upon merely as a means of livelihood. It is not an ascetic cajoling with the superstitions of the people, but a prophet, filled with God's message and fired by His Spirit, that must be the apostle of Christianity. The native Christian preacher is still in his infancy, he has his limitations and probably for years to come he will require the help and counsel of his brother of the West; but he is fashioned after God's pattern, his lips have been touched by the coals off God's altar, and the day is not far distant when, as

light dispels the darkness, he will drive out from the horizon of his countrymen their ancient ideal, the ash-clad fakir.

A few days later we met some of this *sādhu* host at the island of Mandatta in the Nerbudda, where *Unkārjī*, the phallic emblem of *Māhāhev*, (*Śhīv*) holds spiritual sway over the valley of Nimar. Here gather crowds of pilgrims every year, and with them, like eagles to their prey, the *sādhus*. The island, on which the shrine is situated, rises high and rocky out of the midst of the Nerbudda, its rugged sides clothed with dense jungle, within whose depths the ruins of many an old and once famous temple may still be found. The south face however is terraced with buildings clustering round the great temple; while, crowning the crag above, hangs the fairy palace of the island's prince. The morning after our arrival we crossed to visit the shrine. The ferryman viewed us strangely as he sculled us across the deep rushing stream; and the image sellers regarded us suspiciously as we climbed the steps from the water side; but no one ventured to forbid our progress till we entered the temple gateway. Suddenly one of the *sādhus*, with long unkempt hair and fierce blood-shot eyes, rushed wildly before us,

brandishing his heavy knotted stick as if he would smite us to the stones beneath.

"Come not hither," he cried, "the courts of *Unkārjī*, Lord of the sacred waters, have never been defiled by the tread of the unclean."

"*Are!* brother," I said, "we are not going to hurt the god."

"Go back," he cried, "your feet defile the temple of the great *Máhádev*."

"What is wrong with us?" I asked. "How can our presence defile the god?" But he was not to be argued with. To him we were foreigners, without the pale of Hinduism, and their god had nothing for us but hatred. We might be good and kind, we might be bearing a gospel of love, but we were "outcastes," and even our touch was unclean. And as for the native Christians, who accompanied us, he would gladly have sacrificed them upon the temple altar; for had they not forsaken the gods of their fathers to follow the doctrine of strangers? By this time a number of others, just as fierce and bigoted as himself, had gathered round, and the row was promising to be not only unpleasant but dangerous, when a friendly fakir came up and whispered that he would show us the temple from another way. We had no desire

to enter its precincts if we were not wanted, so we gladly turned and accompanied our guide. He led us round to the north of the temple and up a narrow stairway which opened out onto a broad, flat roof, looking right into the windows of the prince's palace above, and presenting a lovely view of the busy river scene below.

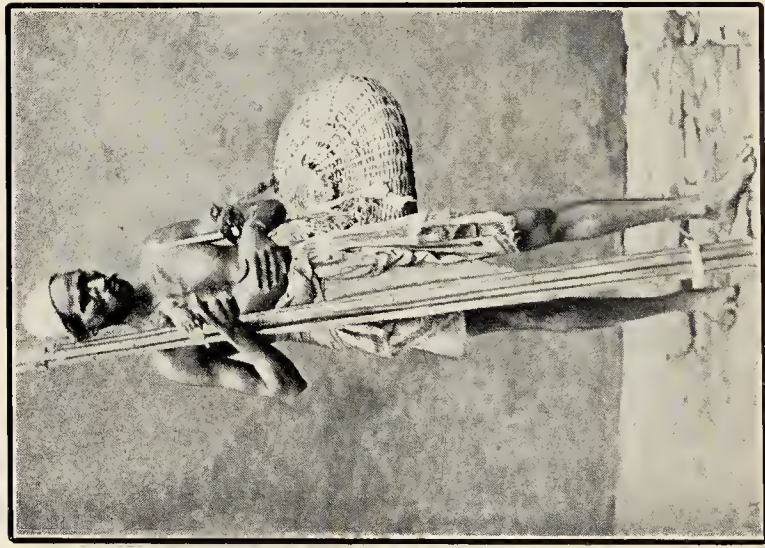
"This," he said, "is the roof of the temple and below that," pointing to a small dome in the centre of whose floor was a tiny hole for offerings, "is the shrine of the god."

It turned out that to this part of the temple "outcastes" might be admitted. So, standing over the place of the god, I gathered the Christians round me and talked to them of Jesus, the Saviour not of one race but of the world, whose presence was barred to no one, and whose temple only the touch of sin could defile. "They refused you permission to stand beside the god," I said, "but here you stand above him and his fanatical attendants, where Christ's followers ought to stand, and where you finally will stand, when gods and temples and ash-clad fakirs will be done away and every tongue confess that He is Lord."

XIV

WHEN SKIES ARE BRASS

A HUSH was over the land. It was not the hush of rest at noonday, when one can almost hear the silent, solemn set of day; nor the hush of sleep at midnight, when the village life has paused and every sound seems melted into solemn moonlight; but that awful hush, the hush of death. It seemed as though nature itself were dead in the valley of Nimar. The *jowár* had struggled upward, only to sicken and wither before coming to maturity; the cotton leaves were shrivelled and dead; the streams had long since ceased to flow; the wells were failing and the thirsty cane and poppy, spite of added care, had given up the struggle. Every herb, every blade of grass was dead; the poor farm labourers, all else failing, had scoured every hedgerow and hillside to pluck up the half burned grass and save their few remaining cattle, or sell it at enhanced price to those who could afford to pay. The fields were empty, for there was nothing to



ONE OF INDIA'S POOR.



EVERY BLADE OF GRASS GATHERED FROM
HILLSIDE AND HEDGEROW.

harvest; and there was no use planting seed, for the ground was hard and dry and refused to conceive.

Even the banyan and mango-trees, those old patriarchs, whose leaves were made to buffet sunshine, and which had learned the lessons of many a drouth, were beginning to shrink and shed their leaves beneath the untempered glare; and the tough *bábúls*, whose roots reached down through rock and clay, finding sustenance where all else failed, were little now but dust clad bunches of thorns. Nothing remained but the soil, pitiful and bare, staring upwards, with its alternating yellow and dull-baked black, into the pitiless blue. It was a dreary, soul-sickening sight, this once garden of India, wont to smile to nature's faintest caress, that far as history reached had never before looked upon the face of famine, but now, stripped of her robes of green, despoiled of her jewels of lake and stream, naked and bare, was lying slain by her lord the sun.

Out in front of the tent at Barwai, whither we had gone on the first outbreak of severe distress, there greeted us as we arose on the first morning a pitiful sight. The great plain beside the town was covered with scattered groups of famine ref-

ugees all ragged, haggard and hungry. Some of the more fortunate few were huddled expectantly round tiny fires, on which simmered an unsavoury mess of grains, picked up in the roadways of the neighbouring bazaars, or flour gathered in tiny doles from the *pūn*-seeking bunyas; others, fearful to face the awakening cravings of a new day, or subdued to lethargy by hunger and disease, lay stretched upon the bare ground, their bent and naked bodies, showing in clear escarpment the skeleton frames beneath, looking in the distance like blackened, fallen tree trunks; but most sat sphinx-like, their knees drawn up and fleshless faces pillared on bony hands, staring with that vacant hopeless glassy vision into the dreaded depths of the awful fate that too surely awaited them.

“Where did you come from, brothers?” I asked as we approached a group on the northern side of the plain.

“From Rajputana,” they listlessly replied, too far gone for almost any new event to shoot a ray of hope across their horizon.

“And why did you leave your northern homes?” I further questioned.

“What could we do, Padri Sahib? Our fields were bare, our cattle dead, our food was gone

and our wells were dry. There was nothing left for us but to flee."

I did not require to ask for details, too well had the sad story been burned into our understandings:—the slowly wilting crops, the anxious wait for rain; day after day passes and still the hard brassy sky, the same pitiless sun staring out of the same pitiless blue; work fails, the little competence disappears, the wife's jewels are sold, the cattle are either dead or bartered for grain, the farm implements disappear one by one, the few furnishings of the home follow, even the household gods go to purchase a few meals; and then when there is no one from whom to borrow and nothing that can be loaned, when the door frame has been torn out and the roof stripped to provide a little flour, when even the roots of the trees have been vainly called on to stop hunger's craving, homeless, naked and hungry, they stagger out onto the highway to join the stream that, caught by some distant rumour of plenty, is staggering forward on its forlorn hope.

"And why did you come South?" I asked.

"We always heard, Sahib," they replied, "that down in Malwa and Nimar there was plenty."

"And have you found help?" I continued.

“When we left Marwar,” answered a middle aged man, “some had carts and bullocks, some had their *bartans* (vessels), all had something, but now you see, waving his hands towards the group, all is gone, sold for food; the people here are just as poor as ourselves.”

What is more terrible than famine? It is not sudden and cataclysmic like a great holocaust or war, but gradual and glacial; with its slow, persistent, irresistible tread, it is like a horrible disease whose agony is cumulative; it wastes and weakens, devours and destroys, but hesitates to kill. Its sufferings are not merely physical, much of its agony is anticipatory; the terrible struggle for life that does not avail, the fading hope, the growing uncertainty and dread. To some at least its hardest blows must have been through the affections and sympathies; the awful agony of seeing those one loves treading the same dread pathway. There were no old folks among the wanderers and few little ones; of all that we saw nothing was more terrible than the sight of a few infants, too weak to cry, sucking vainly at their mothers' dried breasts.

“What are you going to do?” I asked, for I had observed the village police leaving as we approached.

"We can't stay here, Sahib, the *Hávildár* (police officer) has just come to tell us that, as we have been here for a day, we must move on to make room for others."

"But where will you go?" I persisted.

"Where can we go, Ji? We will just go on as we have been going."

Leaving these, we approached a group on the other side of the plain. They were from Kandesh on the south, and, attracted by the fame of this garden of Nimar, had wandered thither, full of hope that here they would find relief; only to find, alas! on its very border, that the people of the "Promised Land" itself were naked and hungry. They too had received the warning of their fellow-sufferers from the north, and were forced to move on. But unlike them they knew the hopelessness of that dread road to the south, and if there was want in front they would at least face it with the faint hope of ignorance. And so, obedient to the orders of the *Hávildár*, they moved on. But whither? God only knew. They were like two rivers flowing into the desert; no sudden catastrophe would work their ruin, they would melt by units and gradually disappear—one died before they were able to get away.

One must not judge too harshly the scanty hospitality of the native states; the hearts of India's people, though one of her chief religious duties is alms-giving, has not yet learned to beat in sympathy with her brother's needs. Some of them did give help to the stranger within their gates, but with an ever-increasing burden of suffering among their own, perhaps it was not to be wondered at that they did little for those from without. When the facts were laid before the British authorities, provision was made for all of these wanderers who were left to be transported back to their own states, to be cared for among those who knew them, by their own princes, under British supervision. But this only localised the calamity. As the weeks crept on, the groan of humanity rose and swelled; the sight of naked and starving creatures was daily at our doors; wheeled traffic in the district had greatly lessened; the hum of life in the market-place began to cease; the vessels went less often to the well; and after many vain appeals to the gods the temples were deserted.

Few people are less prepared to meet the distress of a severe famine than those of India. There are many accessories to the lack of rain which add to famine's calamitous results. The

fatalistic spirit which pervades all India seems, spite of many lessons, to paralyse all tendency to forethought and the curbing of extravagant expenditure, so that in the day of need there are no resources. When the severe distress came on, it found even the wells not deepened nor new ones dug, so that in many parts the suffering from lack of water was most acute. The comparative impossibility of persuading the conservative cultivators of India to leave the congested districts, which have been their traditional homes, and make a home for themselves in the less densely populated parts of the land is another contributor to the severity of famine. Nor are these the only elements of suffering due to the nation's slavery to custom. In times of famine caste fanaticism magnifies the evil, not merely by its callousness to the suffering of others, but by adding to the complexity of the problem of relief.

Though no political element in the question has been too uncertain or too involved to escape the argus eye and frankly-critical pen of the newspaper correspondent, but few of them seem to realise that back both of these and the providences of nature, are peculiarities in the character of the people, which are perhaps the

greatest and most difficult factor of all. Behind all this again is the sorrowful conviction that the Hindu in the hour of his dire extremity has no spiritual stay, no "shadow of a rock" in the whole sunburnt waste of devastation. In a village near to Barwai, a Hindu mother watched with breaking heart her little ones dying for lack of bread. Of the God of mercy and compassion she knew nothing; the elephant-headed *Ganesha* had ever been the family resort in times of trouble. Taking the bread from the children's mouths she bore it daily to the temple and plead with the god for rain. Morning after morning as the day broke she looked forth expectantly for an answer to her prayer, but the skies remained brass, and the breasts of mother earth were dry. Fearing the god had not been sufficiently appeased, she brought of the few pice she had raised by the sale of her household vessels, and made him a more worthy offering. Still the pitiless blue refused to yield its rain. The little ones grew weaker and weaker and one of them passed away, but still the hard heart of the god was not softened nor his anger turned away. She must make greater sacrifice, the god demanded better offerings she was told. But what had she to give? Could they know what, buried

in the corner of the mud floor of her house, she was keeping against the last stroke of this terrible doom? It was only a tawdry piece of native jewellery, a silver earring, but it was a marriage present, a reminder of the happiest day of her life, and to her it meant wealth.

Must this also be given up? But she would do anything to save her boy. In tears the last fond treasure was unearthed, and bearing it to the temple she laid it before the god. Two days she waited but no help came; the morning of the third day she arose and her son was dead. She was only an ignorant Hindu woman, but she had a mother's heart and it was broken. A mad frenzy seized upon her, and mixing up the coarse mud and straw with which she plastered her floor, she carried it to the temple and smeared the image of the god from his elephant head to his ugly feet. When we reached the village the Brahmins were considering what punishment would be met for such an awful affront to the sacred person of the god.

Like the wolf, famine never hunts alone; and its fell companions are, if anything, worse than itself. Scarcity of water had driven many to haunt the stagnant, slimy pools in the river bottoms. One could see them when they were

not begging in the bazaar, grouped around these filthy holes, their scrofulous heads and naked frames bent over between their skeleton limbs. And here it was that cholera found them, reaping with its swift, sharp sickle not by ones or by tens, but by hundreds and thousands. Two hundred a day was the record of one town in Central India, and 3,000 in four days that of a town on its borders. "You could stand any evening," said one missionary, "by the side of one of these pools, and count from 100 to 200 in all stages of disease; and the only attention most of them received was to have their bodies carted away when they died." The incalculable agonies that these pools witnessed with their last few drops will never be told, for it beggars description. One can tell the story of some starving tenement dwellers for he has the lurid lights of contrast; but when it is not one but millions, when the whole landscape is one dull grey of want and suffering, the pen fails and the camera will not focus.

In cold statistics "This famine," to quote the viceroy concerning the last visitation, "within the range of its incidence, has been the severest that India has ever known. . . . It has affected an area of over 400,000 square miles,

and a population of about 60,000,000, of whom 25,000,000 belong to British India and the remainder to native states. Within this area the famine conditions have, during the greater part of the year, been intense. Outside it they have extended, with a gradually dwindling radius, over wide districts. . . . In a greater or less degree nearly one-fourth of the entire population of the Indian continent have come within the range of famine operations. . . . At normal prices the loss was at least seventy-five crores, or 50,000,000 sterling. . . . It was not merely a crop failure, but a fodder famine on an enormous scale, followed in many parts by a positive devastation of cattle . . . both plough cattle, buffaloes and milk kine. In other words it affected, and may almost be said to have annihilated, the working capital of the agricultural classes."

But if this famine has been the most exceptional in history, the system for its relief has been no less so. Considering the vastness of its scale and the nature of those relieved, there has probably never been, in the whole history of calamities, a more excellent or better worked system of alleviation. The immediate cause of famine is of course drought or the failure of the

annual rainfall, the effect of which in a land where ninety per cent. of the population are agriculturists, is not merely to cut off the supply and raise the price of food, but to deprive a large proportion of the community of their source of labour. The Indian government has sought to meet this recurring difficulty of a failure of the monsoons by developing, wherever possible, immense systems of irrigation. More than 29,000,000 acres, or 21.2 per cent. of the entire cultivated area of India, were returned in 1891 as irrigated; and, as the viceroy said in his address on the late famine, "All the possible schemes of this character are well known and are gradually being undertaken." Tank storage is of course everywhere possible, and the digging of these is one of the chief forms of relief work. But their efficacy is limited; one tank may destroy another, the soil may become water-logged, or with an evaporation that is often twelve times the rate of consumption, the supply will rapidly disappear.

The question of food supply has now been virtually solved by the inauguration of a system of railway intercommunication which covers the whole of India, and whose efficacy was seen in the fact that, during the late famine, the

price of food was practically the same in both affected and unaffected parts. Government is still further facing the probable permanency of the difficulty by raising an insurance fund against future distress.

These more permanent works still leave unsolved the immediate difficulty; food, however plentiful, is not to be had without purchasing power, and this again is dependent upon some temporary supply of labour. Indiscriminate charity is both unwise and impracticable. "On the one hand," says the viceroy, "we have set our faces against indiscriminate and pauperising charity, and have endeavoured to insist on relief being administered with the care and method which we owe to the taxpayer and to the exchequer. On the other hand we have been prepared to accept any expenditure of which it could be shown that it was required to save life or to mitigate genuine distress." This relief has been afforded by a system of relief works, consisting necessarily of unskilled labour, railway earthworks, roads and tanks for the storage of water; and for which a daily subsistence wage has been given, the willingness to accept the wage being the test of genuine distress. That these measures have been instrumental in mitigating the

terrible effects of famine is seen by a comparison of the death rates during the last famine in Bengal, under native rule, and the late unprecedented famine of '99-'00. While the excess in mortality in all the affected parts of British India during the latter, including deaths from cholera and smallpox, were only 750,000, those in Bengal alone during the earlier famine were ten millions, or more than one-third of the whole population. The great mortality during the late famine in native states, as revealed by the census, where the relief measures were not under British control, only emphasises the efficacy of the latter's system.

To such a system the missionary's relation was naturally that of an auxiliary. Government officials were glad of the aid of the missionaries in carrying out their plan of relief; their knowledge of the people and wide influence were to them invaluable. Many were called on to superintend hospitals and relief camps; and in not a few cases the missionaries were the only Europeans in a position to reach certain classes. The Bhils and other aborigines, who are looked upon by the ordinary native official as worthless creatures of the jungle, found their best friends among the missionaries, several of whom laid down their lives on their behalf. Missionaries carried on not

a little relief work on their own account; they were also the instrumentality in distributing much of the relief in foodstuffs, etc., sent from America and Great Britain. Of no little value was the medical relief given at nearly every Mission station; for the scourge of famine is not confined to mere inanition, it is more destructive in the many diseases that follow in its train. But perhaps the greatest service the missionaries were able to perform was in the rescue and care of the children. The primary importance of rescuing the coming generation of India's labourers need not be emphasised; and it was a work requiring such care in detail, for many of them had to be nursed like infants, as could better be given under the personal supervision of the missionary than in a temporary government workhouse. Many of these returned to their villages as soon as the stress was over, but many were left with the missionary to teach and train to some means of livelihood, and in many cases to win for the Kingdom of Christ. It was helpful to know that in this work we had the sympathy not only of the Supreme Government but also of many of the native states, one of them, the State of Dhar, giving a grant of both land and money for the purpose.

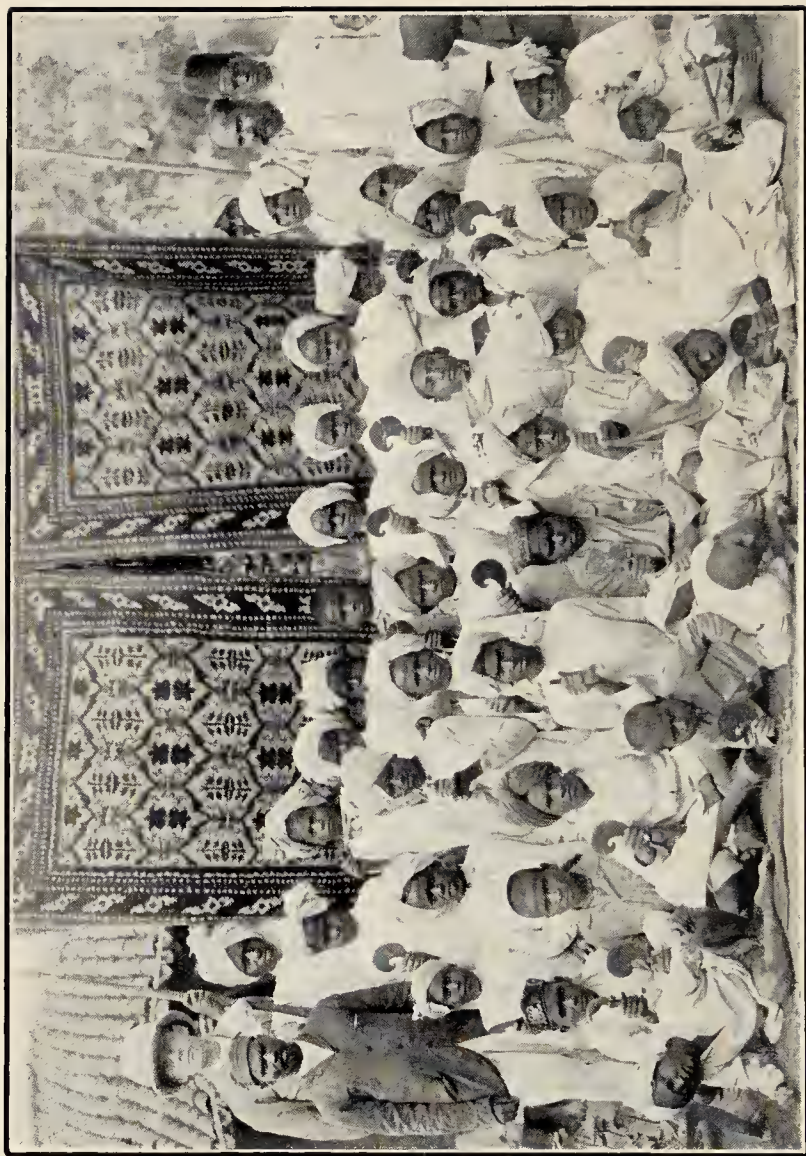
The value of the missionary agency, as a means of relief to the famine sufferers, was singled out for special commendation by Lord Curzon in his speech before the Legislative Council already quoted. "Particularly," he says, "must I mention the noble efforts of the various Christian denominations. If ever there was an occasion in which their local knowledge and influence were likely to be of value, and in which it was open to them to vindicate the highest standards of their beneficent calling, it was here; and strenuously and faithfully have they performed the task." To this may be added the evidence of a disinterested witness, the correspondent of *The Bombay Times*, who, in reporting the state of affairs in Gujurat, says: "The case of the villagers would have been hard indeed but for the intervention of the Padri Sahib (missionary) and the relief fund. One of the brightest features which breaks the monotony of a tour through the famine districts is the constant evidence of the grand self-abnegation and heroic single-mindedness with which the missionaries as a body have risen to the great opportunity afforded by this visitation. Their labours have not been in vain. The comparison between the benevolent activity of the foreign propagandist and the cold,

callous neglect of their wealthy fellow-countrymen, has not been lost upon the Indian mind, and from this time missionary enterprise will command an appreciative and sympathetic admiration from the native, instead of jealous and suspicious scepticism. It was good to see eyes glow and faces kindle with gratitude as the hardy ryots recounted the tale of the Padri Sahib's munificence."

Over against this however must be set the fact that with all that was done the loss, especially in the native states, was terrible. It is estimated that from thirty to fifty per cent. of the Bhils have perished and the destitution among those remaining is appalling. Most distressing is the fact set forth in the following words of a missionary among these people: "Can you imagine the loss of so many starving and our hands crowded? We could not do more than touch a little adjoining circle, while the great sea of need lay all around. More than that, while we were so busy with the temporal needs and none to help, we could not do for them spiritually what was demanded by the situation." And again, "The death of these numbers, to say nothing of the thousands and thousands we never saw, whose bones now whiten the valley and hill,

might have been saved if we had only had more men to help." Even the words of commendation above quoted are not to be viewed from the standpoint of satisfaction but of opportunity. The famine problem is not closed with the advent of the rains and new crops, nor its fruits gathered with the rescue and care of the many orphans thrust upon our hands. These awakened sympathies and new-born opportunities are a call to the Church to evangelise these districts and bring to their starving souls the Bread of Life.

Not only so; as with government so with the missionary propaganda, famine is assuming the nature of a factor in the problem, whose constant recurrence demands a policy. Not an independent policy of temporal relief, which can best be determined by the Imperial authorities, but a policy, the main feature of which shall be a sufficient force not only to be able to cooperate with government in her plan of relief and distribute the funds and food put into their hands from abroad, but also to be able to handle the children that famine thrusts upon our care and enter on the opportunities it affords for preaching the gospel. For this we must all recognise, that whatever may be done for India's poor po-



FAMINE BOYS AND THE CARPETS THEY HAVE WOVEN.

litically, they will never rise from their degradation without a change of character and a new dynamic, and these are only to be found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The fight with famine is a hard fight, the strain on strength and heart is severe, but it is not in vain. Concerning one of our missionaries another wrote: "But when I tell you that when he falls asleep, he keeps dreaming of starving Bhils and is awakened by the crying of some one suffering from cholera; then finds that he himself has dysentery; gets up and takes medicine; lies down again to dream of distributing grain, you will see that he cannot go on long at that rate." Cheerfully, manfully, some of them fought it out at the distant outposts, alone with their great hungry families in the midst of pain, foulness and selfishness, till they themselves were called on to yield their lives to the last fell stroke of cholera. What a touchingly noble picture that piercing noonday sun of the 19th of May looked down upon, out in the lonely Bhil jungle. Far from home, surrounded by none but his native attendants, the still young missionary lay dying in the shadow of a tree by the roadside, stricken down in his round of relief by that awful scourge. Such lives have not been given

in vain and such appeals to the heart of India have not remained unanswered. The great heart of Christ, as it bled afresh over India's famine stricken millions, has been awakening them to a realisation that the incarnate love of God dwells in Him, and that He, the true Avatar, is the solution of their problem, the Light for their darkness, and the rest for their weary and heavy laden hearts.

XV

THE PROBLEM

It seems fitting that I should close these random sketches by a plain statement of the problem as it appears from the view-point of a village preacher. In the previous chapters I have made no attempt to be either historical, statistical or even argumentative, it has been my endeavour to make impressions. If I have succeeded at all, I have given some idea of the immensity of the work, of the great density of the people, and especially, as compared with western lands, of the village population. I have attempted to give, in however meagre a way, some account of the spiritual thralldom of the village people and of the utter hopelessness of any salvation coming to them from within Hinduism. I have stated it as my conviction, based not only on faith but personal experience for several years that the gospel is the "Power of God unto salvation" to these village people, whether educated or uneducated, that all are open to its influence, and that from all classes men are being saved by its message.

I have further stated it as my conviction that "the foolishness of preaching" is still the method which, by divine grace, is best fitted for reaching men's hearts with the gospel message. It has been objected by even such a remarkable convert as Fr. Goreh that the village people are "ignorant and do not understand." Surely if the village people do not understand it is not the fault of the gospel. Christianity is not Vedantism, it is neither abtruse nor recondite, and its simplicity has ever been its greatest claim. If the people do not understand it is not the fault of the message but the messenger, and his failure to enter into touch with their viewpoint and modes of expression, and can be overcome by a closer and more sympathetic study of the people. For this very reason as well as others, I have sought to emphasise the necessity for a fuller development of a native agency, through whom the missionary shall multiply himself and upon whom shall gradually fall the whole burden of the work.

My silence in regard to other methods of mission work is not of the nature of criticism. I recognise that in the great problem of the world's redemption God's ways are many and His gifts many. The only qualification I would make is

that of Dr. Dennis, that while the evangelistic aim must not be regarded as monopolised by the evangelistic method, it should itself pervade all other methods. There are always two dangers in mission work, one, that of making the means, whether it be education, medicine, or even preaching, an end in itself; and the other that of over institutionalising. There is a glamour about an institution, whether school, orphanage or hospital, in its regular duties, its codified results, and its appeal to the eye, a glamour that is fostered by the public craving for something definite, something they can see, and whose results are tangible. We must learn to judge all institutions not in themselves, nor in comparison with those of a similar kind, but in their relation to the one end and aim of all mission work; and to develop them accordingly.

With a population of nearly 300,000,000, increasing at the rate of one per cent. or 3,000,000 per annum,¹ and a Christian population of only 2,000,000 or fifty-five per cent. of whom only 560,000, or sixteen per cent. are Protestants, the

¹ The much diminished increase of the past decade, being only 2.42 per cent. for the whole ten years, need not necessarily change this estimate drawn from the previous twenty years, as the circumstances were peculiar, including during the ten years two severe famines and plague.

paramount duty in the accomplishment of this aim of missions in India is the bringing of Jesus Christ into such direct contact with the masses that they may be able to intelligently receive Him. As ninety per cent. of these, or 270,000,000 live in the villages, the large proportion of missionary effort should flow in this direction. It has therefore been my endeavour to give some idea of the claims and opportunities for the evangelisation of the villages. As the place of a native agency in the fulfillment of this purpose is strategical, some plan for their training and development is of greatest importance, as are also the building up of the native church and the industrial, intellectual and spiritual training of the Christian community: but we must allow none of these to sidetrack us from the main movement among the masses in the villages.

As to what is being done for the villages of India it is difficult to procure exact statistics; probably not more than fifty per cent. of the whole foreign staff, or about 1,000 missionaries are engaged in this work, giving one to about 270,000 of the people. What this means to the accomplishment of the work may best be seen by a concrete example. It has been my custom to keep a record of all the meetings held in con-

nection with our evangelistic work in my own field. The reports show that in one year the gospel was preached by my five helpers and myself to about 50,000 people. Of these about 8,000 were women, 14,000 children and the rest men. This number was reached in about 1,300 different meetings, exclusive of all congregational and Sunday-school services. Allowing Sundays for these services, and the classes during the rains, this would give, with two or three preachers present at each meeting, an average of two meetings daily to each man, together with all the journeying involved. The largest attendance of the year under review was 300, many meetings had less than twenty, some less than ten, the average being about forty. Moreover of these 50,000 people, many were counted several times, as some places were reached almost weekly. I have estimated that in the western half of Central India, our mission, with a staff of twenty-five missionaries and all their agencies, does not reach, even with a single gospel message a year, more than 300,000 out of a population of 5,000,000, or at most about six per cent., and out of 17,000 villages we occupy permanently only eighteen.

One would like to believe that the state of

affairs in Central India is exceptional, and that in other parts the population is more fully reached. The perusal of such a tract as that published in 1896 by Mr. R. P. Wilder, entitled "An Appeal for India," shatters any such hope. Take such facts as the following: In the Nizam's dominions, with a population of 11,500,000, there are only about thirty missionaries, in the Telegu part one missionary to about 500,000 people. In the Poona district, out of 1,191 towns and villages, 1,169 have no resident Christian, and very rarely are visited by a messenger of the gospel.

Kathiawar has three missionaries to 3,000,000 people. Thousands have never heard of Christ. Kutch, said to have the population of Uganda, has never had a missionary.

In central provinces, Chanda, with an area of 10,749 square miles, with 2,700 villages, and a population of over 690,000, has no missionary.

Rajpore has 5,000,000 population, and only twelve missionaries.

Bhopal, with 2,000,000 people, has just been opened to the gospel.

Behar, with its vast population of 24,000,000, has only six European missionaries. Quite half of the province is as much heathen as any other

part of the world, having never yet even heard the sound of the gospel.

Dacca has a staff of two missionaries and four evangelists to 2,409,000 people. Tipperah has four ladies among a population of 1,500,000, and Pubnah, with 3,000,000, has five missionaries.

Ballia, in the Northwest Province, with a population of 924,763, is entirely unoccupied.

Rajputana has a population of over 12,000,000, with only twenty-four European missionaries at work.

And these are only a few of the telling facts related, facts upon which the lapse of five years has made no material impression.

Another important element in the problem of India's evangelisation is the proportion of foreign to native agency necessary for the accomplishment of the work. This native agency in evangelistic work must be carefully distinguished from the native pastorate. All missionaries are agreed in the advisability of the native church supporting its own pastors, but the pastors of a poor and scattered flock numbering only sixteen per cent. of the population, even if they had much time to spare from their pastoral duties, can form but a small element in the solution of the problem. A native evangelistic

agency, associated with each missionary and as a part of the mission's staff, is the only aid to be relied upon besides the foreign staff. Except in the older missions the supply for such an agency is still very limited, and can only be increased as the Holy Spirit chooses out men from among the new converts. It will be many years however before the proportion of native workers will grow so large that we will be able to lessen our demands for foreign aid; and still longer before the native contingent will be able to dispense with the inspiration, instruction and supervision supplied by the foreign missionary.

Mr. John R. Mott took a consensus of opinion from all the great mission fields last year on the question of the absolute demand for missionaries in addition to native assistants. He says in his late work "The Evangelisation of the World," "Leading authorities in all the great mission fields have been asked to estimate how many missionaries, in addition to native assistants, would be required so to lead the missionary enterprise as to accomplish the evangelisation of these countries within a generation. The highest number suggested by any one is one missionary to every 10,000 of the heathen population. Few gave a lower estimate than one to

100,000. The average number given is one to 50,000. The number most frequently specified is one to 20,000." Mr. Mott in his computation of the needs follows the last figure, which would give for India a staff of 15,000 foreign missionaries, or an increase of 750 per cent.

The work, however great its requirements, is not without its encouragements. Even in the matter of numbers the Protestant community in India increased during the period between the censuses of '71 and '91 at the rate of 105 per cent. while the general population had grown only by twenty per cent. But this in no way represents the only effect of missions. A great change has gone on in the hearts of the people towards Christianity. Years of contact with its teachers and adherents, kindness received especially during famine times from the missionaries, the gradual effect of the constant preaching of higher ideals, and especially the presence in their midst of men, whose whole character and life have been transformed and uplifted by this new doctrine, have had their effect in softening the hearts of the people to the gospel message. Again, as Sir Charles Elliott, the former Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, said in a recent paper before the Church Congress in England, "The caste and

family influence—which are as powerful among the low as among the high castes—are immense impediments to conversion: it is to this we owe a large number of the ‘Borderers’ who, while almost convinced at heart, shrink from a final break with the relationships they hold so dear.” Such a class is not only a testimony to the unchronicled results of missions in India, but also to the sincerity of those who, in the face of such opposition, have had the courage to confess Christ.

As to the character of the converts the same paper said: “The great mass of our converts belong to the aboriginal tribes whose animistic religions rest entirely on the basis of fear, so that the doctrine of a God of love has for them an infinite attraction, and they find it comparatively easy to leave their ancestral faiths. . . . Their characters are simple and their mental grasp is small; and it cannot be expected of them that they should rise to any height of devotion. . . . But conversion has placed their feet on the first step of religious growth. They are removed from debasing superstitions and from an atmosphere in which immorality is licensed to one in which every impulse received from their leaders is in the direction of moral and intellectual im-

provement. For those who belong to the Aryan races we can make a stronger claim, for they have in almost every case come through strong tribulation into the Kingdom of God."

Straws show which way the current sets. During my convalescence from a late severe illness, the Hindu barber remarked to me: "It was God (using the term for the one God) who saved you, Sahib; all we people in the bazaar have been praying for you." Travelling some months ago in the same railway carriage with a native official in Indore State, he remarked during conversation: "I myself am too old to become a Christian, but I believe that in a few years our children will all accept your faith." Another evidence of this unchronicled power is in the great numbers who in the villages, where the gospel has been preached, have given up idolatry. Even more significant perhaps is the great interest shown, especially by the young men of India, in the person of Christ; though they will have nothing to do with our church organisations and shrink from the idea of baptism, they devour most eagerly any literature on the person and work of Jesus. No book is in as many hands in India to-day as the gospel, and no name looms as largely on the horizon of the

thoughts of her people as the name of Jesus Christ.

With a people so heterogeneous, not only in origin but disposition, with such a kaleidoscope of religious cults and systems, with social barriers like caste and so many petrified customs, and with a false patriotism that clings to the old because it is national and refuses the new because it is alien, the problem in India is perhaps the most difficult in Mission history. But if difficult of conquest, India is correspondingly strategic in its position. The birthplace of two of the greatest religious movements of history, the home of more than one-fourth of the Mohammedans of the world, and containing one-fifth of the population of the world, its conquest for Christianity is fraught with great meaning to the world problem. Moreover never before were its doors so open to Christian missions. In almost every portion of the Empire may organised mission work be carried on, the State of Bhopal being among the last to open their doors. From every part of the field come news of strategic positions waiting for labourers. A few years ago we were invited by the prime minister of one of the unoccupied states of Central India to begin work within his jurisdiction; and several times

during the past few years, exceptional opportunities for entrance into some of the larger towns of our field have been afforded us, but we have been unable to accept them because of the limitations of our staff.

On the other hand the forces opposed to the gospel are organised as never before. Orthodox and Somaj movements alike are issuing tracts; the faithful are being called on to "Awake! and oppose the progress of Christianity"; their preachers follow us into the villages proclaiming the mistakes of Christianity; their educational policy is alive and active; and almost the whole native press is enlisted in their aid.

Let the Church face the problem boldly, fearlessly and with calm assurance; let there be on the part of those at home no feverish demand for startling results, no impatient interference in the plan of work, but a loyal faith in their representatives at the front, and a determination to give them prayerful and adequate support. Let those on the field not be led away by the glamour of public approbation, but remember that their duty is to preach the gospel and bring India into vital contact with the Living Christ. God is behind us, victory before, in the name of our King let us go forward.

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